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ABSTRACT

This packet contains documents that provide information about family and child homelessness and the need to address homelessness within the context of community development. The following sections are included: (1) "Family Homelessness" (Homelessness Information Exchange); (2) "A Report on the 1988 National Survey on Shelters for the Homeless" (U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development); (3) "A Shelter Is Not a Home" (Manhattan Borough President's Task Force on Housing for Homeless Families); (4) "Family Homelessness and Housing" (Wellspring House, Inc.); (5) "Study of Homeless Children and Families: Preliminary Findings" (Child Welfare League of American and Traveler's Aid International); (6) "Homeless Families: A Neglected Crisis" (U.S. House of Representatives, Committee on Government Operations); (7) "A Service Model for Homeless Families" (Massachusetts Organization of State Funded Shelter Providers); (8) "Homeless Children and Education" (Center for Law and Education, Homelessness Information Exchange, and the National Coalition for the Homeless); (9) Examples of Family Programs; (10) a collection of articles on homeless families; (11) a list of nine organizations to contact for more information; and (12) a bibliography with 49 references. Appended is a list of publications available from the Homelessness Information Exchange. Eight tables, five charts, and one diagram are included. (JS)

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Family and Child Homelessness

revised May 1989

HOMELESSNESS

UD 027 190

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Family and Child Homelessness

Homelessness Information Exchange
May 1989

Table of Contents

I. *Family Homelessness*
Homelessness Information Exchange

II. *A Report on the 1988 National Survey on Shelters for the Homeless*
U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development

III. *A Shelter is not a Home*
Manhattan Borough President's Task Force on Housing for Homeless Families

IV. *Family Homelessness and Housing*
Wellspring House, Inc.

V. *Study of Homeless Children and Families: Preliminary Findings*
Child Welfare League of American and Traveler's Aid International

VI. *Homeless Families: A Neglected Crisis*
U.S. House of Representatives, Committee on Government Operations

VII. *A Service Model for Homeless Families*
Massachusetts Organization of State Funded Shelter Providers

VIII. Homeless Children and Education
Center for Law and Education, Homelessness Information Exchange, and the National Coalition for the Homeless

IX. Examples of Family Programs

X. A Collection of Articles on Homeless Families

XI. Organizations to Contact

XII. Bibliography--Family and Child Homelessness

XIII. Publications Available from the Homelessness Information Exchange

Homelessness Information Exchange
1830 Connecticut Avenue, N.W.
4th Floor
Washington, D.C. 20009
202/462-7551

The Homelessness Information Exchange is a national nonprofit information service on homelessness, offering summaries of model programs, research, funding sources and technical advisors.

The Homelessness Information Exchange emphasizes the need to address homelessness within the context of community development by providing information on a continuum of solutions including emergency shelters, support services, transitional and permanent housing and preventive strategies.

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Section I

Family Homelessness

Homelessness Information Exchange

Family Homelessness

Homelessness Information Exchange
May 1989

Homelessness is a crisis in the lives of countless numbers of Americans. The problem is of an indeterminate magnitude. Nationwide, estimates range from the most modest federal figure of more than 350,000 (U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development (HUD), *Report on Homelessness and Emergency Shelters*, 1984), to the estimates of 2 to 3 million put forth by advocates and service providers (Community for Creative Non-Violence, Congressional Testimony, 1980).

The homeless are no longer the stereotypical skid-row alcoholic. They are young and old, abled and disabled. They are deinstitutionalized psychiatric patients, unemployed individuals and families, disabled veterans, runaway youth, teenage mothers, low-income families, and countless others who find themselves outside of a shrunken social service network. Their situations are diverse, but they are linked by the common thread of poverty and lack of housing.

Perhaps the greatest indicator of the changing nature of homelessness in America is the growth in numbers of homeless families in recent years. Nationwide, families with children are reported as the most rapidly increasing segment of the homeless population. In *A Status Report on Hunger and Homelessness in America's Cities: 1988*, 20 of 27 cities surveyed by the U.S. Conference of Mayors indicated that the number of homeless families increased in 1988. The report estimates that 34 percent of all homeless persons are in family units. In Detroit, New York City, Norfolk, VA, Portland, OR, and Trenton, NJ, families make up at least half of the homeless population.

The 1988 National Survey of Shelters for the Homeless, conducted by HUD, revealed that families comprise 40 percent of the sheltered homeless population; in large jurisdictions, they represent 52 percent of persons in shelters.

HUD and the Conference of Mayors both report that about three-fourths of homeless families are headed by a single parent. The Conference of Mayors found, however, that in Denver, Louisville, Portland, Salt Lake City, and Seattle, 40 percent or more of homeless families were headed by two parents. In both reports, children are estimated to represent about one-fourth of the homeless population.

The reasons that families become homeless are diverse. Though there is no typical homeless family, several contributing factors have been identified. Lack of affordable housing, inadequacy of public benefits, unemployment, and personal crises such as illness and domestic violence are those more frequently cited.

The tightening of the housing market has been in effect for more than a decade. Throughout the 1970s, abandonment and conversion of buildings led to an annual loss of 500,000 rental units. This trend has continued into the 1980s. In addition to the shrinking market, housing costs have risen dramatically in urban areas.

- In New York City, the cooperative and condominium conversions over the past decade have claimed more than 50,000 rental units.

- At the same time more than 150,000 low-rent apartments were destroyed by arson and owner abandonment.

- Between 1970 and 1985, rents in Boston increased by 329 percent.

- The state of Massachusetts was 12,000 units short of housing all of its citizens in 1986.

- Within three years the state of Maryland estimates they will have a shortage of 38,900 units for households earning less than $10,000 per year.

Statistics show that there are at least twice as many low-income households nationwide as there are affordable rental units, and in 1981 HUD reported that 2.5 million low-income families were being displaced annually.

The availability of public housing has not kept pace with the numbers of eligible families. In 1988, an estimated 200,000 families were on a waiting list for public housing, an additional 110,000 qualified for rent subsidies, but were unable to locate housing and an estimated 50,000 were doubled-up in existing units. In some areas, waiting lists for public housing exceed the number of available units, and households must wait several years for units to become available.

Families who depend upon public assistance as their primary source of income have found the purchasing power of those benefits diminished by inflation. While the poverty level for a family of three in 1985 was defined as an annual income of $8,850, the maximum amount provided to families through Aid to Families with Dependent Children and food stamps was $7,000. Changes in eligibility criteria and difficult application procedures have discouraged people from applying. Some are not even aware of the availability of benefits or that they may be qualified. Some families who would otherwise qualify may be ineligible simply because they do not have a permanent address. Coupled with rapidly rising housing costs, many families are simply unable to find housing or are confronted with choices between eating, paying utilities, or paying rent.

Though single-parent families characterize the make-up of many homeless families, some parts of the country are experiencing increasing numbers of two-parent homeless families. In fact, both the new poor and victims of intergenerational poverty are becoming homeless with increasing frequency. The former often become homeless as a result of job loss and inability to find new employment. They may relocate in hopes of finding better job opportunities. Scarcity of middle-income jobs, leading to chronic unemployment or underemployment, is increasingly seen as an aspect of family homelessness.

Less frequently noted factors leading to family homelessness are divorce or separation, mental health problems, and migration other than for job opportunities. Unstable living arrangements, such as doubling up with friends or relatives, can result in periodic and temporary homelessness. Ironically, non-receipt or accidental termination of benefits may result in eviction and homelessness, at which point the family may no longer be eligible for benefits.

Children of homeless families suffer greatest from the instability and inattention to their physical and psychological needs. The impact of homelessness on children has been the subject of recent investigation. Studies have found homeless children to show developmental delays, sleeping and eating disorders, listlessness, hyperactivity, aggressiveness, depression, anxiety, and more physical health problems when compared to children of similar socio-economic status. Their school attendance is irregular and they are forced to change schools often. They are more frequently assigned to classes for handicapped children and are ridiculed by other children. The stress, instability, and lack of a support network intrinsic to being homeless, create trauma in the lives of children.

Family shelters are being opened throughout the country, but in the face of growing demand for shelter and other services, most communities remain unable to meet the need. Additionaly, two-parent families or those with male children over ages 12-14 are frequently separated by gender. The use of hotels to house homeless families has proven to be extremely expensive and has resulted in channeling limited funds into sub-standard housing with few or no support services.

Where assistance is available, families may be reluctant to seek it since it can jeopardize their status as legal guardian of their children. They may be judged incapable of looking after the welfare and safety of their children and the children may then be placed in foster care. Ironically, foster care families may receive more financial assistance than natural parents to care for the same child. In many states, an adult without children is not eligible for any type of public assistance, so in addition to the trauma of losing their children, parents may also suffer financial loss. In the process of trying to obtain help, the family unit itself may be destroyed.

To establish or regain an independent and dignified lifestyle, homeless families need more than shelter. Provisions must be made for permanent housing development, job training and placement, social services, child care, and attention to the education, psychological and recreational needs of children.

Section II

A Report on the 1988 National Survey on Shelters for the Homeless

U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development

A REPORT ON THE 1988 NATIONAL SURVEY OF SHELTERS FOR THE HOMELESS

March 1989

U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development
Office of Policy Development and Research
Division of Policy Studies

PART III
THE CLIENTS OF HOMELESS SHELTERS

CLIENT TYPES

The fundamental make-up of the client population of homeless shelters has changed over time. While both families and unaccompanied men are increasing among the sheltered homeless, families are increasing more rapidly. This was first observed nationally in the 1984 Survey, and is continuing (see Exhibit 12). Although still nationally the largest group of clients, unaccompanied men no longer represent the majority of the sheltered homeless. This situation represents a new chapter in the evolution of homeless shelters in the United States, which historically have been associated with skid-row mission-type operations that sought to care for mostly middle-aged men, troubled by alcoholism and mental illness.

Exhibit 12. Distribution of the Sheltered Homeless, 1984 and 1988 [a]

	1984	1988
Unaccompanied Men	66	45
Unaccompanied Women	13	14
Family Members:		
All Types	21	40
Single Parents With Children	NA	30
Couples with Children	NA	6
Couples without Children	NA	4

[a] Percents do not add to 100 due to rounding. In 1984, shelter managers were asked about client characteristics in January 1984. In 1988, they were asked about an average night between September 1987 and August 1988.

Families are rapidly becoming major users of homeless shelters. Nearly doubling their proportional representation in shelters, members of family households now stand as two out of every five clients. Even more telling, perhaps, is the fact that the actual number of persons in sheltered families, as a specific group of sheltered homeless clients, has more than quadrupled during the past four years to over 60,000 in 1988. Three out of four sheltered families are composed of single parents with children, with the remainder almost equally divided between couples with and without children.

Family members now outnumber unaccompanied men as the major client type in large jurisdictions: 52 percent versus 36 percent (see Exhibit 13). Furthermore, over the past four years, while families have come to occupy a greater share of shelter space, the proportional representation of unaccompanied men in homeless shelters has uniformly declined across all four regions. In 1984, the percentage of unaccompanied men in each region ranged from 59 percent to 79 percent; in 1988, it ranged from 42 percent to 53 percent.

Exhibit 13. Percent of Client Types by Region and Size of Jurisdiction

	Size of Jurisdiction			Region			
Client Type	Large	Medium	Small	East	South	N. Central	West
Unaccomp. Men	36	52	45	44	53	42	44
Unaccomp. Women	12	15	15	8	19	16	17
Families[a]	52	33	40	48	28	42	39
	100	100	100	100	100	100	100

[a] Includes: one and two parent families, couples without children, and unaccompanied youth.

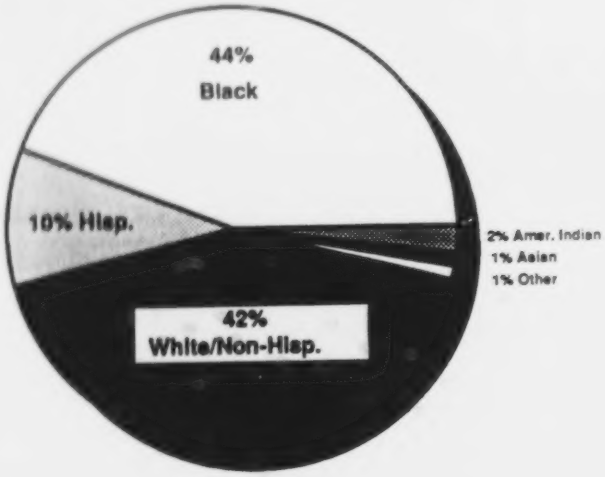
Although the character of the homeless shelter population has undergone considerable change, the proportion of unaccompanied women, which includes such diverse groups as the victims of domestic violence as well as so called "bag ladies", has remained about the same at 14 percent. With the general rise in shelter population since 1984, their actual number has increased 180 percent. Since fewer homeless shelters focus primarily on unaccompanied women, as opposed to other types of clients, they have had to seek assistance at homeless shelters with more diverse clientele.

While patterns of shelter use have significantly changed, unaccompanied men still constitute a major part of the homeless shelter population. In absolute numbers, there were, in 1988, an estimated 70,000 unaccompanied men in homeless shelters on an average night in jurisdictions with 25,000 or more population. They are still the largest client group in the South, as well as in both medium-size (52 percent) and small (45 percent) localities. In addition, two-out-of-five homeless shelters are still primarily devoted to their care, and they also represent over one-third of the clientele of "other" shelters. Hence, although they are a somewhat smaller proportion of the sheltered homeless population than in past years, they are still major consumers of homeless shelter care.

CLIENT DEMOGRAPHICS: AGE AND RACE/ETHNICITY

The change in the character of the homeless shelter population, signaled by the increase in the proportion of families, also involves a significant shift in racial composition. In 1984, almost three out of five of the sheltered homeless were white (56 percent). In 1988, the proportions have reversed. The survey data reveal that 58 percent of the users of homeless shelters on an average night are minorities, most of whom are black (see Exhibit 14). Minorities predominate in two-out-of-four regions, in all shelter types, and in medium and large jurisdictions (see Exhibit 15). It is only in smaller jurisdictions that minorities are not the major users of homeless shelters. In 1984, high percentages of minorities in homeless shelters reflected a concomitantly large local minority population. While, to some extent, this characterization is still valid in light of the concentration of minorities in the Nation's inner cities, the pervasiveness of recent demographic changes in the sheltered homeless across region and, perhaps more importantly, across shelter type, suggests that the overrepresentation of minorities among the sheltered homeless has intensified.

Exhibit 14. Racial/Ethnic Composition Of The Sheltered Homeless

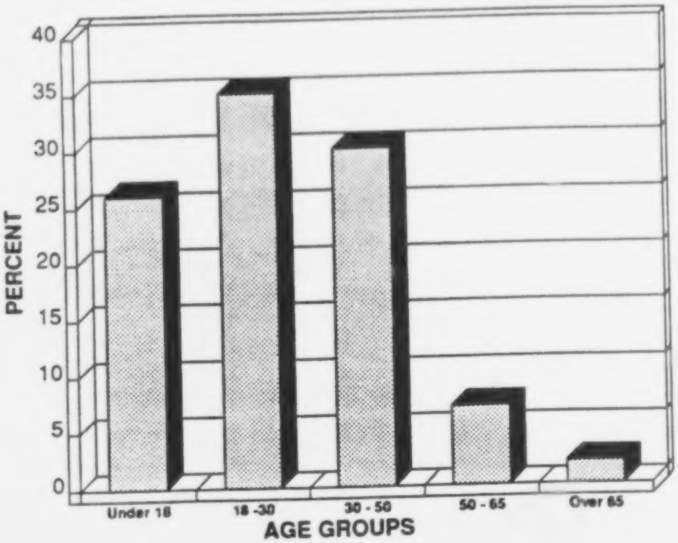


With the increased number of sheltered families with children, it is not surprising that about three-in-five of the sheltered population is under 30 years of age (see Exhibit 16). Nationally, one-fourth are children. In the West and in small jurisdictions, about two-out-of-three shelter residents are under age 30 (see Exhibit 17). Almost one-third of homeless shelter residents in jurisdictions of over one million persons are children. Also, over

Exhibit 15. Percent Racial/Ethnic Composition of Sheltered Homeless Population by Size of Jurisdiction, Region, and Type of Shelter

	White	Black	Hispanic	Other	Tot. Minority
Size					
Large	13	70	14	3	87
Medium	45	43	9	3	55
Small	68	18	7	7	32
Region					
East	30	52	15	3	70
South	50	41	6	3	50
No. Central	43	39	11	7	57
West	52	38	4	6	48
Shelter Type					
Unacc. Men	47	38	9	7	54
Fam. w/ Child	47	40	8	5	53
"Other"	35	50	11	4	65

Exhibit 16: Sheltered Homeless Population By Age



one-half of all residents in shelters serving primarily families are children. As the size of jurisdiction decreases, the proportion of persons in the "18 to 30" age group appears to increase somewhat. The proportion of persons in the "30 to 50" group, however, does not differ substantially across the three population groups. As has been noted in other studies, elderly people -- especially those over 65 years of age -- are seldom among the clients of homeless shelters.

Exhibit 17. Percent Age Composition of Sheltered Homeless by Size of Jurisdiction, Region, and Shelter Type

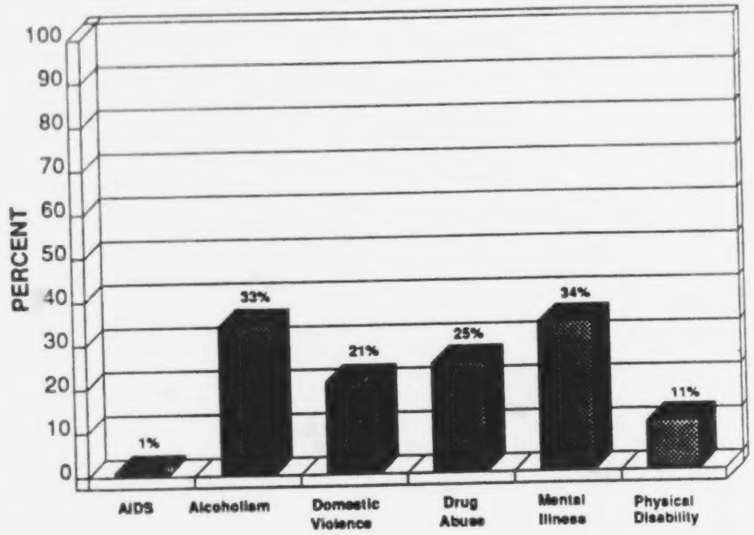
	Under 18	18 - 30	30 - 50	50 - 65	Over 65
Size					
Large [a]	30	28	34	6	1
Medium	23	35	30	9	2
Small	25	42	26	5	2
Region					
East	28	29	33	8	2
South [a]	25	31	34	10	1
N. Cent.	27	36	30	6	1
West	22	45	24	6	3
Shelter Type					
Unacc. Men [a]	1	47	38	11	4
Fam. w/ Chil.	55	30	14	1	0
"Other"	29	29	33	7	1

[a] Percents do not add to 100 due to rounding

EXTENT OF MENTAL ILLNESS, SUBSTANCE ABUSE, DOMESTIC VIOLENCE OR OTHER PROBLEMS

It has long been recognized that the personal histories of some of the sheltered homeless include mental illness and/or alcoholism. In recent years, substantial numbers of victims of domestic violence, as well as individuals with histories of "hard" drug abuse, have also been observed in the sheltered homeless population. In the 1988 Survey, shelter managers were asked to estimate the respective proportions of their adult clients, on an average night, who had problems with domestic violence/battering, mental illness, alcoholism, and drug abuse. They were also asked if any of their adult clients had a diagnosis of AIDS or AIDS Related Complex, and if any of their clients were physically disabled.[8] A single individual could be counted in more than one category; i.e., the categories are not mutually exclusive. The national averages of these estimates are presented in Exhibit 18.

Exhibit 18: Adult Sheltered Population With Selected Medical/Social Problems



Two-thirds of all shelter managers reported that none of their clients, on an average night, had been diagnosed as having AIDS. Hence, nationally, the percentage of persons in homeless shelters thought to have AIDS is quite low, i.e., one percent. Also, about one-in-five shelter managers reported that they did not know if any of their clients had AIDS. About one-tenth of all homeless shelters did have persons with AIDS among their clientele, accounting for an estimated five percent of these shelters' daily occupancy.

The estimates on alcoholism (33 percent) and mental illness (34 percent) are consistent with extensive prior research in these areas. The respective estimates of drug abuse (25 percent) and physical disability (11 percent) also fit with current research, but these areas have not received as much attention in the context of the sheltered homeless population. Similarly, the emerging research literature on domestic violence, while growing, has not involved homeless shelters to an extent sufficient to validate the 21 percent estimate reported here. The sheer magnitude of this proportion itself, however, relative to those for mental illness and alcoholism, suggests, at the very least, that homeless shelters are playing a role in ameliorating the effects of this widely recognized problem by providing safe living quarters. It should also be noted that seven percent of the shelters that assist primarily unaccompanied men reported clients that had been involved in domestic violence. Interviews with these shelter managers revealed that some of these men were the victims of domestic violence, while others were the perpetrators. The proportions of each were not clear.

In addition, managers of shelters that serve primarily families with children estimated that about one-half of their adult clients, on an average night, had been involved in domestic violence. No other problem was as prevalent. The only other estimates that approached it were for mental illness (40 percent) and alcoholism (37 percent) in shelters primarily serving unaccompanied men. In contrast, shelters that served primarily families with children reported an estimated 12 percent and 20 percent for mental illness and alcoholism, respectively (see Exhibit 19).

Exhibit 19. Percent Incidence of Selected Medical/Social Problems in the Adult Sheltered Population by Size of Jurisdiction, Region, and Shelter Type

	AIDS	Alcohol.	Dom. Violence	Drug Abuse	Mental Illness	Physical Disability
Size						
Large	1	24	15	26	22	10
Medium	1	41	26	31	39	12
Small	0	29	21	15	39	10
Region						
East	2	29	12	23	29	14
South	0	36	38	20	43	7
N. Cent.	0	39	26	44	24	13
West	1	31	18	18	41	8
Shelter Type						
Unacc. Men	1	37	7	26	40	13
Fam. w/ Chil.	0	20	49	21	12	5
"Other"	1	33	27	25	36	10

Shelters in medium-size jurisdictions consistently display the highest percentages of individuals with troubled personal histories. With respect to their regional dispersion, marked changes occurred between 1984 and 1988 in shelter managers' estimates of the relative prevalence of alcoholism and mental illness among their clients (see Exhibits 20 and 21). Although the actual number of persons with alcoholism has increased, the estimated proportion of the sheltered homeless suffering from it appears to show a decrease in three out of four regions. In contrast, the estimated proportion of the sheltered homeless with mental illness shows increases in all four regions. These data may be indicative of developing trends in the incidence of these problems among the sheltered homeless.

Exhibit 20. Incidence of Alcoholism Among the Adult Sheltered Homeless by Region, 1984 and 1988

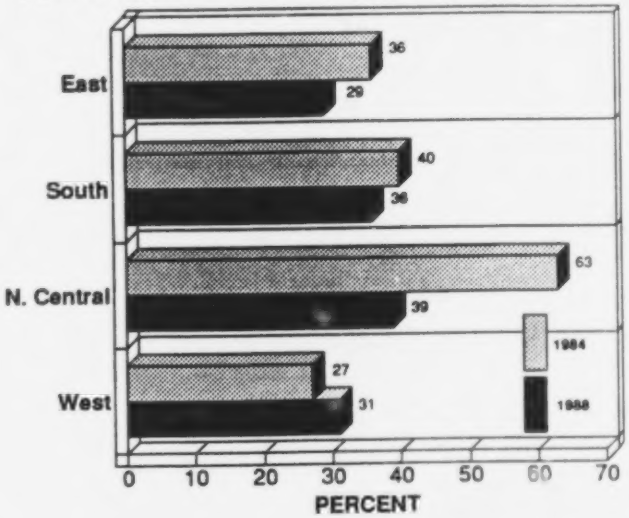
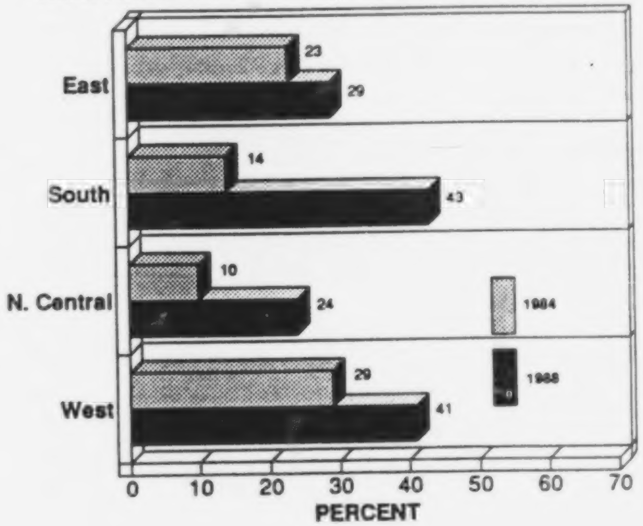


Exhibit 21. Incidence of Mental Illness Among the Adult Sheltered Homeless by Region, 1984 and 1988



LENGTH OF HOMELESSNESS

Shelter managers were asked, "among the people you served on an average night this year, how many would you say had been homeless for more than three years and how many had been homeless for less than three months?" Their responses indicate that, on an average night, about one-half of the sheltered population had been homeless for less than three months, and about one-quarter had been homeless for more than three years (See Exhibit 22).[9] About 70 percent of the clients in shelters serving primarily families with children had been homeless for less than three months. Thirty-eight percent of the clients in shelters serving predominantly men were reported to have been homeless for more than three years. Regionally, longer experiences of homelessness -- whether interrupted or continuous -- tend to be more prevalent in the South where an estimated two-thirds of the shelter clients had been homeless for three months or more; and least prevalent in the North Central shelters, which reported only one-third of their clients, on an average night, had been without a home for three months or more.

Exhibit 22. Duration of Homelessness, 1988 (in percents)

	Less Than 3 Months	3 Months To 3 Years	More Than 3 Years	Total
Total Sheltered Population	49	28	23	100
Shelter Type				
Shelters Serving Primarily Unaccompanied Men	32	30	38	100
Shelters Serving Primarily Families With Children	69	28	3	100
Other Shelters	43	28	29	100
Region				
East	43	38	19	100
South	34	32	34	100
N. Central	69	17	14	100
West	50	24	26	100

PREVIOUS LOCATION OF THE SHELTERED HOMELESS

The sheltered homeless population generally relies on shelters in their immediate localities rather than traveling to a different area. Responses from shelter operators in 1988 indicated that 76 percent of the sheltered homeless, on an average night, had been in the local area in which they were sheltered for more than one year (see Exhibit 23). Evidence suggests that the sheltered homeless in 1988 are proportionally less transient than earlier in the decade; the 1984 Survey found only about one-half of the shelter clients served during January of that year to have been in the local area for more than one year.

On an average night, clients from shelters serving primarily unaccompanied men are somewhat less likely (62 percent) to have been in the local area for more than one year than are clients from family oriented shelters (84 percent).

Exhibit 23. Prior Location of the Sheltered Population, 1988

	Percent Local For More Than One Year
Total Sheltered Population	76
Shelter Type	
Serving Primarily Men	62
Serving Primarily Families	84
Other Shelters	80
Region	
East	86
South	77
N. Central	65
West	68

A Shelter Is Not A Home

Report of the Manhattan Borough President's Task Force on Housing for Homeless Families

Dr. James R. Dumpson
Chairman
David N. Dinkins
Manhattan Borough President
March 1987

Myths and Facts about Homeless Families

1

MYTH 1:

The solution to the problem of homelessness is an adequate supply of temporary shelter.

FACT:

The solution to homelessness is the development of permanent housing affordable to those families in shelters. Transitional housing is truly temporary only if there is an adequate supply of permanent housing.

MYTH 2:

The homeless are primarily single individuals - street people, bag ladies - who are deinstitutionalized mental patients.

FACT:

On any single night New York City provides shelter to more people in families (4600 families consisting of 16,500 persons) than to single individuals (10,500). More children -- 11,000 -- live in the city's emergency housing system today than the total number of homeless single individuals, and homeless children are the fastest-growing segment of the City's homeless population.

MYTH 3:

Homeless families are the "worst" of New York's welfare families. Family homelessness is the result of drug addiction, mental illness or behavioral dysfunction.

FACT:

No facts support the belief that addiction or behavioral problems occur with more frequency in the homeless family population than in a similar socioeconomic population. Homeless families are not demographically different from other public assistance families when they enter the shelter system. Homeless families are more likely to have a history of inadequate housing and, after a term of living in a welfare hotel, to develop other problems. Family homelessness is typically a housing and income problem: the unavailability of affordable housing and the inadequacy of public assistance income.

MYTH 4:

There are 4600 homeless families in New York City.

FACT:

The "homeless" designation attached to 4600 families includes only those in emergency housing. It does not include the thousands more who are doubled-up with friends or relatives -- conservatively estimated at 100,000 -- who also lack housing of their own. The homeless families in emergency shelter are simply the tip of the iceberg of New York's population at high risk of homelessness due to the shortage of low-income housing.

MYTH 5:

The growth of the homeless family population in New York City is uncontrollable, unremitting and inevitable.

FACT:

The difference between the number of entries to and exits from the emergency housing system has been predictable, averaging 60-65 families per month over the last several years.

MYTH 6:

Homeless families have problems which prevent them from adequately maintaining a permanent apartment.

FACT:

In most cases homeless families are able to manage households and can be fully integrated into ordinary permanent housing. However, a minority of families do need considerable help to achieve stability and self-sufficiency. These families require long-term, supported, transitional housing -- without time limits on length of stay -- and intensive social service intervention in order to become successful tenants.

MYTH 7:

Families with other housing options voluntarily enter the shelter system in order to upgrade their housing at the public's expense and get priority for rehabilitated permanent housing.

FACT:

There is little evidence that families forsake stable housing arrangements hoping to get an apartment through the City. Generally homeless families entering the shelter system have exhausted all other housing resources available to them including doubling-up with friends and relatives and renting substandard, hazardous apartments.

MYTH 8:

The supply of shelter beds determines and encourages the demand for shelter.

FACT:

The steady growth in the shelter population is due to families remaining longer, not increased demand. The net number of homeless families sheltered has risen because exits from the emergency housing system to permanent housing have not kept pace with entries.

MYTH 9:

If shelter is made too pleasant or comfortable, families will never want to leave or those not truly in need will flood into the shelter system.

FACT:

The length of stay of families in apartment-style transitional housing is generally shorter than length of stay in hotels. The crucial variable seems to be the amount and intensity of housing relocation assistance which is provided: families will leave temporary housing when they are helped to find permanent housing, no matter the type or quality of the transitional housing.

MYTH 10:

Homeless shelters can be designed and built to meet low quality standards because families stay in the emergency housing only temporarily, and anything is better than the streets.

FACT:

The terms "temporary" and "emergency" have become misleading: temporary housing becomes de facto permanent housing when no exit is available from the temporary system. The average length of stay of families in temporary housing is 13 months. Forty percent have been in temporary situations for one year or more.

MYTH 11:

Families prefer barracks-style congregate shelters because they are clean, secure and provide three meals a day.

FACT:

Congregate shelters are the least desirable form of family shelter. Nearly one-quarter of all families requesting emergency housing assistance make other arrangements rather than enter a congregate shelter. Families will appear at an emergency office rather than their welfare centers to maximize their chances of being placed in a hotel rather than a congregate shelter. One Human Resources Administration study reported that 17% of families interviewed at an emergency office had already been referred to a congregate shelter that same day.

MYTH 12:

Large congregate shelters are the most cost effective way of sheltering families.

FACT:

Barracks-style congregate shelter is the most costly form of family shelter used in New York City today, more expensive to operate than welfare hotels or apartment-style transitional units.

MYTH 13:

No community wants housing for the homelesss in its own backyard.

FACT:

No community wants huge, poorly-supervised barracks-type facilities opened in the "middle of the night" and operated by the City with inadequate security and support services. Communities have accepted housing for the homeless when the facilities are small-scale and well-supervised by an accountable non-profit organization, priority is given to homeless people from the same area, and advance planning includes local input.

MYTH 14:

The homeless flock to New York City from other parts of the region or country to secure access to shelter.

FACT:

Almost all families currently in the shelter system are natives of New York City. Only 5.4% of all homeless families came from outside New York City immediately before requesting emergency housing.

Support Services

8

SERVICES IN TRANSITIONAL HOUSING

Support services for homeless families must be designed by considering the different needs of these families. Some families need few social supports, while others need many. The backgrounds and prior experiences of homeless families, as those of other families, may include a number of problems apart from the lack of housing. Some families have experienced domestic violence; others suffer from unemployment, drug and alcohol abuse; some were teen parents or school drop-outs.

The common denominator among homeless families is that they lack housing and are poor. However, we believe that every homeless family, regardless of its reason for homelessness, has experienced at least some degree of emotional distress brought about by the dislocation which attends the personal crisis of losing one's home.

A second underlying assumption is that the period of homelessness -- a period of crisis and transition -- can provide an opportunity for social service professionals and the families themselves to address longer-term and ongoing problems.

A third assumption is that any support service program for homeless families should have as one of its goals the empowerment of these families. Enabling families -- through their own efforts -- to become independent and self-confident should be the goal of professional efforts.

Services to homeless families should be viewed as a "*continuum of services*", ready to begin when a family is identified as being at risk of becoming homeless, continue through the period of homelessness and follow through after the move to permanent housing. Services should also be "*portable*" -- available to the family as they move from transitional to permanent housing.

Thus, all transitional housing programs for families should include:

- short-term crisis intervention efforts and preliminary needs assessment to help homeless families handle the initial trauma of homelessness;
- longer-term efforts focused on increasing a sense of control and power, and restoring personal and familial functioning;
- "concrete" services such as child care and job training as well as "soft" services like counseling and life planning;
- uninterrupted services to be available through the transition to permanent housing.

The experience of the best models of transitional housing indicate that effective programs include a minimum of three suppport services: child care, referral to permanent housing and life planning/job development.

Child Care and Linkage to Schooling

About half of all children in emergency housing presently are age five or under. Child care is essential in order to allow heads of households, who are mostly women, to search for permanent housing, to receive uninterrupted public benefits, to work, or to enroll in educational or vocational programs.

Although there is a severe shortage of child care opportunities in New York City for all low-income families, we believe it is crucial that homeless families have priority access to child care. Presently, it is estimated that only 10% of all homeless families in emergency housing participate in formal child care arrangements.[1] This low enrollment is primarily due to the City's difficulty in getting parents to enroll their children in the programs which are available, and the scarcity of available day care slots near emergency housing sites.

Many different models of child care for homeless families already exist, including group day care, family day care, and cooperative child care or babysitting operations. Both full-time care and respite (part-time, drop-in) care exist either on-site at transitional housing facilities or hotels, or as targeted slots (setasides) for children from homeless families in existing community programs. Generally, child care programs located on-site at transitional housing facilities are best used and more regularly attended.

Equally essential is that transitional housing programs include linkages to public schools. One survey of homeless families indicates that 50% of the children in one temporary shelter had been kept back at least one grade. Clearly, frequent moves between different temporary facilities interrupt connections to schools and affect achievement and attendance.

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[1] Office of Councilmember Ruth Messinger, "Children in Need: The Child Care Needs of Homeless Families Living in Temporary Shelter in New York City", p. 3.

Referral to Permanent Housing

Transitional housing programs which provide intensive housing relocation assistance have proven to be more successful than other programs in moving families quickly to permanent housing, thus reducing the length of stay of families in emergency facilities (See Table 6, Chapter 3). The provision of housing relocation assistance and the availability of affordable housing are the crucial variables in the timely exit of families from temporary housing.

Housing relocation assistance should include: identification of private and public housing resources, transportation to view apartments, information about housing entitlements, landlord interviews and lease arrangements. Families also need assistance to make a smooth transition to permanent housing: securing household furnishings, security deposits, and moving expenses.

Life planning[2] and Job Development

This inclusive term refers to services which build confidence and develop problem-solving strategies so that the goals of self-sufficiency and independent functioning upon relocation to permanent housing may be set and income stabilized. (Personal and employment-related issues are covered.)

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[2] This concept has been identified by the Women's Institute for Housing and Economic Development, Inc. in its Manual on Transitional Housing, February 1986.

Among the activities associated with these tasks are:

- educational/vocational training;
- job training/placement programs;
- public benefits (entitlements) counseling;
- addictions counseling and treatment, for both drug abuse and alcoholism;
- parenting information and training;
- coordination of medical care;
- legal and tenancy information and advocacy;
- preventive pregnancy programs;
- home management information.

Delivery of Services

Such services can take place on-site, as part of a transitional facility's own programming, or in the community, and can be delivered by professionals, and self-help and peer support groups. Case management, whereby one professional caseworker supervises and follows all aspects of a family's case (whether the problems are housing or family-related) seems central to the success of the support services.

The transitional housing programs which seem most effective in stabilizing and relocating families to permanent housing have caseworker/family ratios which do not exceed 1:20. HRA caseworker/family ratios in hotels now stand at 1:60, an unacceptable ratio, which allows for only the most minimal intervention and assistance. In order to reduce current caseworker-family ratios in hotels and shelters from 1:60 to 1:20, it is estimated that HRA's Crisis Intervention Services budget would have to be increased by $2.5-$2.75 million.

RECOMMENDATIONS:

Support services to homeless families should be "portable": the same level of services made available in transitional housing should follow the family through its move to permanent housing and continue uninterrupted in the permanent location.

The expansion of child care and job training opportunities for homeless families is particularly crucial if heads of households are to achieve independence of the social welfare system.

Every transitional housing program must offer assistance in the following areas: child care, linkage to permanent housing and life planning/job development skills. Staffing patterns in transitional housing must not exceed caseworker to family ratios of 1:20.

SERVICES IN PERMANENT HOUSING

Studies examining the degree of integration of formerly homeless families in permanent housing yield inconsistent results as to the extent of difficulty these families have had or have caused in their new housing. (See Chapter 3) However, studies are clear that all formerly homeless families, following a stay in an emergency housing system which is generally dehumanizing and destabilizing, would more easily adjust to new housing if they could avail themselves of social support.

However, our recommendation that social services be offered to formerly homeless families has wider applicability. If such services were routinely made available to any poor family in need, and a way found to deliver services to the client rather than waiting for the family to find the services, homelessness may be prevented. Other socially expensive and damaging problems such as domestic violence, child abuse and drug abuse may similarly be prevented.

Service Needs

The service configuration we recommend suggests that no family would move to permanent housing from a transitional setting until they had achieved a level of functioning which promised some measure of success in managing a home and family. Thus, these recommendations concerning social services for permanently-housed families are directed to the majority of families, not to those having severe problems who, we believe, should be placed in long-term supported housing.

The notion of a service "continuum" implies that a linkage must exist between the services provided at the transitional housing facility and a social service provider located in the new community. Applicable case records and information about families should be transferred between the two agencies in a way which respects client confidentiality. Ideally, workers from the community-based social agency or HRA staff should visit each family in the hotel or shelter before the move, to determine and link services before the move to permanent housing.

Whenever possible, and if they so desire, families should be returned to permanent housing located in the communities from which they came. Since this has not routinely been the case, we believe every family will need, at the very least, a "welcome wagon" orientation to schools, health clinics, day care centers, recreational facilities, and religious institutions in the new community.

In addition, families should be encouraged to become involved in tenant organizations and associations. Every family also should be provided "tenancy training," to develop home-management skills and respect for common rules and regulations.

Since a substantial number of homeless families are relocated to permanent housing owned and operated by HPD, it is important for the social service provider and HPD management to cooperate closely. Facing the problems of vandalism in its buildings, HPD has become wary of the placement of large numbers of families from the shelter system in its buildings.[3] This problem could be addressed by creating formal links between HRA or the identified community social service provider and the housing agency. Regular meetings between the assigned HRA or community worker and the HPD building manager, at which danger signs would be handled pertaining to a particular family's housing situation -- vandalism, drug dealing, occupancy by unregistered tenants -- should be arranged.[4]

However, such measures cannot be effective until the HPD-managed buildings are staffed at a more adequate level. Currently, each HPD building manager is responsible for 250 occupied apartments.

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[3] HPD Departmental Memorandum from Stephen Norman to Joseph Shuldiner, Subject: HRA Tenant Survey, March 6, 1985.

[4] Position Paper: New Policies for Preventing Family Homelessness, for Alternative Emergency and Transitional Shelter and for Re-Housing Homeless Families, Community Council of Greater New York, November 1986.

This large caseload mitigates against managers having hands-on knowledge of building and tenant problems.

Recommendation:

HPD management and maintenance staff for occupied in rem buildings should be increased so that tenant and building problems can be identified, and social service agencies notified more rapidly. The HPD building manager to occupied unit ratio should be reduced from 1:250 to 1:200. Approximately 40 additional building managers should be hired.

SERVICE DELIVERY

Social services to formerly homeless families can be provided either directly by the public agency, HRA's Office of Family Services (OFS), through HRA contract with non-profit community-based agencies, or through a combination of public and voluntary efforts. Regardless of the auspice, the social service provider must be locally-based. Because such organizations understand the particular community, they can more successfully orient formerly homeless families to new neighborhoods and local services.

The current HRA program which provides for one visit to a relocated family after move-in is not sufficient. Many local OFS offices responsible for these visits are understaffed, especially in those neighborhoods to which homeless families most usually relocate. Without a significant City budget commitment to increase the number of caseworkers in the local OFS offices, we do not believe HRA can effectively intervene on behalf of these families. OFS workers currently carry caseloads which vary from 80 to 5 cases; in 24 of the 44 OFS offices, workers carry caseloads of over 30 families.

RECOMMENDATION:

Access to follow-up social services should be routinely provided to formerly homeless families for one year after relocation to permanent housing. An assessment as to need for support services should be carried out for each family before or at the point of move-in to permanent housing. For those families needing follow-up services, home visits should be made once a month, at minimum. Caseworker/family ratios should not exceed 1:30.

A combination of HRA and community-based agency workers under contract to HRA should be employed to provide these services. These workers must be "dedicated", i.e. their sole responsibility should be to provide follow-up services to relocated families.

If HRA is to provide the services directly, HRA's Family and Children's Agency budget must be increased to support enhanced staffing levels for OFS offices. In order to reduce OFS caseloads to 30 families, it is estimated that 24 additional workers would be needed, at a cost of approximately $600,000.

Section IV

Family Homelessness and Housing

Wellspring House, Inc.
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POSITION PAPER ON FAMILY HOMELESSNESS AND HOUSING

As a group with the history of six years' work with homeless families, Wellspring House is in a position to offer what we hope will be some useful comments on the present situation and future strategies in relation to the growing problem of homelessness among families. We are presenting this position paper because, in company with a number of other providers and persons working in the area of family homelessness, we are seriously concerned about some of the solutions which are being planned.

We begin with the popular view of family homelessness. Many comments in the newspaper and on TV indicate two popular lines of thought on the topic of homelessness, both of which are reflected in some strategies being proposed by the State to deal with the present homeless population and the projected growth of about 60% over the next two years. One reaction is compassionate, the other is punitive, but both are rooted in the same assumption: that homeless families are a special class of people, requiring different responses and strategies from those needed by people who are still housed. The compassionate view sees that homeless families are especially victimized, by abuse or by rises in rent or condo-conversion. Homeless families in this view are "good" people, but need a great deal of special help. Homelessness is therefore seen as an "illness" needing treatment. Recently a radio show which has raised many thousands of dollars to benefit families in shelters prefaced its appeal with the words, "Homeless families are the biggest problem in our society". The FAMILIES are identified as the problem, not their homeless condition.

The non-compassionate view also sees homeless famililes as different. This view perceives homeless families as headed by feckless, self-indulgent or neurotic women who escape difficult marriages rather than work at them, go on Welfare rather than work to support their families and afford market rents, or will not make the adjustment to sharing accomodations with another family. In this view, homeless families cause their own problems.

These apparently opposite views are both based on the assumption that homeless families are different from other families, and therefore require special treatment, and in both cases the issue of housing is not directly addressed at all. (A recent article in the Boston Globe stated explicitly that homelessness was not due to lack of affordable housing, but to the unrealistic expectation of families who would not put up with what they have.) Both these views ignore or deny that lack of housing is a cause of homelessness. The "solutions" to the problem thus stated result in strategies which come close to treating homeless families as either sick or criminal, and they are subjected to regulations based on these assumptions. The "cure" or "reform" of homeless families is sought within the increasingly complex and expensive shelter system.

HOMELESSNESS AS THE VISIBILITY OF NEED.

Our view as a group dealing with the immediate and daily issues of family homelessness at the individual, social and political levels, is that families becoming homeless are not essentially different from families still housed in unsatisfactory conditions. All families that become homeless are poor. If they were not, they would have the means to re-house themselves. The definition of "poverty" in relation to homelessness is changing, as even lower middle class families find themselves unable to pay the rents demanded, but at this point the majority of homeless families are still from the "culture" of poverty. Among the poor, those most vulnerable to homelessness are also those who are victims of generations of poverty, and are unable to maintain healthy living patterns. The ways of compensating for the misery and humiliation of long- term poverty - alcohol, drugs, gambling and violence - and the side effects of these among women - apathy, poor parenting, inability to plan ahead - are familiar to all social workers. None of these problems, of course, are peculiar to poor people, but among the poor there is less chance of escaping them and they become a way of life. This way of life becomes visible to the public when families become homeless.

An Example from the Past

The relation between the problem itself and its public visibility may be made clearer by an historical example. In the early years of World War II in England, children from the big industrial cities were "evacuated" to the countryside to escape German air raids. Many turned out to be malnourished, ill-clad and with poor social habits, and because all this was commented on in the media, the poverty and misery of the slums in the cities was revealed and denounced as a national disgrace. Consequently, programs of "food education" were begun, school lunches and family allowances were instituted, and later new homes were created. Displacement did not cause the children's problems, it merely revealed them and caused a public outcry, forcing government action.

The Working Homeless

The population coming out of chronic poverty and usually on Welfare, is still providing the largest proportion of homeless families at present. However, another population of families with at least one parent in full-time employment is now becoming homeless. This includes people from middle-class backgrounds, displaced by big rises in rents and condo-conversions, and with salaries too low to afford market rents. As is the case of the very poor, these "working homeless" are essentially no different from others of similar income who are still holding on to their homes, with increasing anxiety. The number of families of this type becoming homeless will inevitably grow, and will need shelter and services to obtain housing. It is for this reason that we do not consider a closed-referral system realistic in addressing the future of the homeless.

The Answer to Homelessness is Housing

When poor families become homeless, the problems of poverty are revealed. The response, understandably, has been to want to provide all kinds of services to these families. But the assumption is that these services must be provided in the context of sheltering, and as a result more and more shelters are mandated, including some especially designed for very long stays for "multi-problem" families.

In our view, this response will not provide a solution to the problem of homeless families, because the problems of most of these families, apart from the actual fact of being without a home, are not due to homelessness as such, but to the culture of poverty.

Families still housed, but in poor conditions and with inadequate incomes, have the same problems. They also need services, and without them will become homeless in their turn. The provision of more and more shelters with more and more services is also unrealistic. The cost of providing enough shelters for all those becoming homeless in the near future is enormous, and with no corresponding increase in available housing units, the families are destined to stay in shelters for months and even years, with all the expense involved. When they do eventually find housing, shelter life has not prepared them for the emotional isolation and financial responsibilities of "independent living". For some, indeed, this will be their first experience of "independence". The longer they stay in the shelter beyond two or three months, the harder the adjustment, so that further services will still be essential after they leave if all they have learned is not to be wasted. Shelters with experience of families resident for long periods - six months or more - have noticed that the families tend to deteriorate during long stays, become very dependent and unwilling to take responsibility. Providing services for such families in shelters can only be a "holding" operation. Shelters are a sort-term necessity, and should be as good as possible, but they are not the solution.

Housing with Services

What is needed is the construction or adaptation of appropriate housing, and the provision of services for families in housing - families which have been homeless and those which have not.

This means planning or adapting housing in terms of neighborhood. It means providing not only places to live, but efficient support systems to facilitate community building. These should include access to public transportation and to employment, and such facilities as community child care, preschools, laundry and even common dining familities for working women (services which were routinely provided in war time so that women could support the war effort). In order to enable people to get off Welfare and get well paid jobs, easily accessible educational services are also needed. In addition, neighborhood community organizers are needed as well as more traditional services, such as medical and mental health services. The availability of support groups and "clinics" to help address the problems of parenting, budgeting, alcoholism, etc. are basic. The experiences of many counselors and organizers has demonstrated that self-help groups, with the aid of a professional facilitator if needed, and group "clinics", are the most effective way of confronting problems and needs. Shared experience is a powerful tool for change. It is also the least expensive.

Cost Effectiveness

There are two ways in which the provision of appropriate housing, rather than more services in more shelters, is cost effective. One is that the staffing of more and more shelters with more and more highly qualified service personnel is extremely expensive, yet after all this, the eventual cost of housing all these families still must be met. If families are housed as soon as possible, and services provided in that context, services are directed toward where they are most needed, and the length of stay in shelters will be brief. Referrals and links with appropriate services in their new neighborhoods, rather than long-term shelter services, would be appropriate for shelter guests.

The other way in which the provision of housing with adequate services is cost-effective goes far deeper. Neighborhood planning, services and education enable women as well as men to obtain well-paid employment and provide incentives to encourage local initiatives in setting up small businesses and cooperatives. All have the ultimate aim of making it possible for most people to pay for their own housing without subsidy. Subsidies are at present an essential social service, and some people will always need them, but they are not the real answer to homelessness. The answer is realistic economic planning.

Low Cost Housing Is Not a Dream

We are not asking for the moon. Much is already being done. All across the country, cooperatives and groups such as "Habitat for Humanity" are demonstrating that it is possible to erect decent housing at low cost. Government support is needed in the form of tax breaks, control of development, etc. But the skills, the know-how and enthusiasm exist to overcome the problem of homelessness entirely. Without this, the "Massachusetts miracle" will continue to be built on a foundation of human misery, to the shame of a State with a long history of progressive and humane social policy.

Summary

To sum up, our view is that the problems of homeless families are problems of poverty, often long-term, and not of homelessness as such. In the case of "working homeless", the fact that the problem is basically lack of affordable housing is even clearer. Services are needed, but services provided in the context of housing, not sheltering, and aimed at encouraging self-help and community support systems. We see this as more realistice, more respectful of human dignity, and less expensive than the provision of more shelters, however ably and compassionately run.

Recommendations

We are well aware of the legal and administrative complexity of the problems faced by those required to respond to homelessness at the State level. We are also aware of the personal dedication and deep concern of many who are involved in this endeavor at all levels. We are grateful for the expert help and support that we as shelter providers have received. It is because we are aware of the concern and the abilities of those working on strategies that we feel able to make some recommendations. With respect and in the spirit of cooperation, these are our recommendations:

1. - that it is preferable that shelters continue to be funded by the Department of Public Welfare, whose mandate is to ensure basic benefits to those in need. To focus primarily on services needed by shelter families is to take attention away from their basic needs, including housing.

2. - that the experience, skills and resources of the Department of Public Welfare and the Department of Social Services, as departments of the Executive Office of Human Services, together with those of the Executive

Offices of Communities and Development, be combined in order to strategize for the provision of affordable housing, and of appropriate services in that context, calling on legislators to make this possible. In relation to this, we note that over $400 million in bonds authorized for low and moderate income housing (including family housing) under the Comprehensive Housing Act of 1987, has not yet been released. Action on this is necessary so that the stock of affordable and appropriate housing can be increased without further delay.

3. - that permanent housing (including SRO's) at present in use by low income people should not be appropriated by non-profit groups for the purpose of providing programs for groups with special needs. This changes permanent housing to transitional housing, thus reducing the stock of affordable housing. We recommend that if such a change is made the non-profit group be required to replace the lost units with an equal number of permanent housing units.

4. - that the proposed Homeless Prevention program be implemented; we applaud this emphasis on prevention of homelessness. But we recommend that other subsidy programs already in operation be retained, specifically the Emergency 707 program and the HUD Section 8 Vocher program. Without these, the proposed $300 per month rent subsidy would require families on AFDC to spend over 60% of their income on rent. The Prevention program, taken alone, would especially penalize women and children obliged to leave home because of 'divorce, violence, or substance abuse', to use the language of the proposed program. Since the woman is seldom the person leasing, she would not qualify for "prevention" funds; forced to seek emergency shelter she would then receive only the $300 per month subsidy.

5. - that education offered to shelter staff provide an analysis of broad economic and political issues as they impact on homelessness, so that sheltering can be seen in its proper focus as a necessary stop-gap measure.

6. - that the Shelter Providers' group focus on the basic human rights of homeless people and maintain a healthy tension between the State and the Providers.

7. - that the Massachusetts Coalition for the Homeless work to find ways to organize the homeless, to help them find their own voice to express their needs.

Section V

Study of Homeless Children and Families: Preliminary Findings

Child Welfare League of America and Travelers' Aid International

STUDY OF HOMELESS CHILDREN AND FAMILIES

PRELIMINARY FINDINGS

The Child Welfare League of America and Traveler's Aid International conducted a joint study to gather information about homeless families and their children and the children of homeless adults. This study is part of a larger research effort on the issue of homeless families.

The Child Welfare League which represents 450 child-serving agencies has made homeless children and families a priority in its activities. Traveler's Aid International represents a group of 50 Traveler's Aid agencies which serve approximately 100,000 people annually. Recently the Traveler's Aid agencies began reporting a change in the basic population served. Families and their children have become a greater percentage of their client population.

The study is unique because the population examined was people not necessarily living in shelters. Shelter space for families is limited and, when available, families frequently have to be separated. Studies based totally on shelter populations miss a significant segment of the homeless families population.

The data was collected by staff of Traveler's Aid agencies in eight cities:

- Washington, D.C.
- Tampa, Florida
- Detroit, Michigan
- Milwaukee, Wisconsin
- Salt Lake City, Utah
- San Francisco, California
- Los Angeles, California
- Houston, Texas

Data was collected on the first 50 single adults who came to each Traveler's Aid agency and the first 50 families (adults accompanied by minor children) who came to each agency from mid-October through mid-December, 1986. (Data was not collected on runaway and homeless youth unless they had their own children with them.)

Data was collected on 404 adult persons traveling without children and 163 families.

WHO ARE THE HOMELESS CHILDREN?

(331 children were with the 163 families)

- Their average age was 6 years old
- Of those old enough to attend school, 43% were not currently attending
- 10% were in need of health care
- 10% were suspected of being abused and/or neglected or both (this may be 3 times the rate in the general population)

ARE OTHER CHILDREN AFFECTED BY HOMELESSNESS?

- The families had 73 minor children elsewhere
  - 53% with former spouse
  - 11% with current spouse
  - 3% in foster care (3 times the rate in the general population)
  - 23% with relatives
  - 10% with friends
- The adults who were alone had 103 children elsewhere
  - 41% with former spouses
  - 25% with current spouses
  - 6% in foster care (6 times the rate in the general population)
  - 26% with relatives
- In this study, for every 10 homeless adults 8 children were affected.

WHERE DID THE CHILDREN SPEND THE PREVIOUS NIGHT?

- One in five (21%) spent the previous night outside, in a bus or train station or in a vehicle
- One in four (25%) spent the previous night in an emergency shelter
- 27% spend the previous night with friends or relatives
- 16% had spent the previous night in their own homes
- 11% had spent the previous night in a hotel, motel or rooming house

WHO ARE THEIR PARENTS?

- 56% of the families had only 1 parent (although the spouse may be elsewhere, i.e. not necessarily a single parent household)
- On the average, the female parents were 29 years old and the male parents were 34 years old
- 63% of the female parents and 41% of the male parents had been unemployed more than 3 months

WHY DID THEY LEAVE THEIR LAST PERMANENT ADDRESS?

- 44% lost their job(s)
- 15% could not pay the rent
- 15% resulted from a family crisis (HALF OF THESE WERE SPOUSE ABUSE)
- 12% were evicted

WHY ARE THEY GOING WHERE THEY ARE GOING?

- 45% to find jobs
- 11% for housing
- 42% family or friends are there

WHAT ROLE DO FAMILY AND FRIENDS PLAY FOR HOMELESS FAMILIES?

- 57% had lived with or were living with family and friends
- More than three-fourths (77%) of the families who had been homeless more than 3 months had lived with family and/or friends
- 42% of those who had lived with family or friends left because they were asked to leave by other residents or the landlord, or the housing was inadequate.

IS HOMELESSNESS A NATIONAL OR LOCAL PROBLEM?

- 80% of the families came from outside the local area of the Traveler's Aid agency
- The families came from 30 different states and were traveling to 21 different states

Section VI

Homeless Families: A Neglected Crisis

U.S. House of Representatives, Committee on Government Operations

Union Calendar No. 588

99th Congress, 2d Session - - - - - - - - - - - - - House Report 99-982

HOMELESS FAMILIES: A NEGLECTED CRISIS

SIXTY-THIRD REPORT

BY THE

COMMITTEE ON GOVERNMENT OPERATIONS

together with

DISSENTING AND ADDITIONAL VIEWS

OCTOBER 9, 1986.—Committed to the Committee of the Whole House on the State of the Union and ordered to be printed

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CONTENTS

Page

I. Introduction 1

II. The causes of family homelessness 3

  1. Scarcity of low-income housing 3
  2. Inadequate income or public assistance benefits 4
  3. Increases in personal crises 5
  4. Cuts in Federal assistance programs 6

III. Findings and conclusions 6

  1. Emergency assistance programs are unable to adequately address the problem of homeless families 6
  2. HHS has failed to follow its regulations on monitoring, reviewing and auditing the EA Program 13
  3. The shelter system for homeless families currently funded by EA is destructive to families, harmful to children and may be perpetuating long-term homelessness among families 15

IV. Recommendations 18

  1. HHS should follow its regulations and audit, review, and monitor the EA Program to ensure that emergency shelter funded by the Federal Government is sufficient to protect the health and well being of members of homeless families, and is also cost effective 18
  2. Using EA funds, in conjunction with State and local budgets, HHS should develop a model shelter program for homeless families 18
  3. HHS should conduct an outreach and education program to inform those States not participating in EA, but which have homeless problems, about the benefits and uses of the EA Program to encourage States to use Federal emergency funding 18
  4. HHS should use EA Program statistics as a partial basis for counting the numbers of homeless families 19
  5. The President should issue an Executive order declaring homelessness a national emergency and require the Federal Government to coordinate all existing resources to provide immediate emergency assistance and long-term solutions to the crisis of the homeless 19
  6. Congress should amend Title I of the Social Security Act to allow EA to be used for the construction, purchase, rental, and rehabilitation of emergency shelters for homeless families 19

Dissenting views of Hon. Robert S. Walker, Hon. Frank Horton, Hon. Alfred A. (Al) McCandless, Hon. Larry E. Craig, Hon. Howard C. Nielson, Hon. Jim Saxton, Hon. Partick L. Swindall, Hon. Thomas D. (Tom) DeLay, Hon. Richard K. Armey, Hon. Jim Lightfoot, and Hon. Beau Boulter 21

Addtional views of Hon. Ted Weiss 23

Additional views of Hon. Robert s. Walker 24

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99th Congress 2d Session | HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES | Report 99-982

HOMELESS FAMILIES: A NEGLECTED CRISIS

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Mr. Brooks, from the Committee on Government Operations, submitted the following

SIXTY-THIRD REPORT

together with

DISSENTING AND ADDITIONAL VIEWS

BASED ON A STUDY BY THE INTERGOVERNMENTAL RELATIONS AND HUMAN RESOURCES SUBCOMMITTEE

On September 23, 1986, the Committee on Government Operations approved and adopted a report entitled "Homeless Families: A Neglected Crisis." The chairman was directed to transmit a copy to the Speaker of the House.

I. Introduction

Under the House of Representatives Rule X, 2(b)(2), the Committee on Government Operations is authorized to "review and study, on a continuing basis, the operation of Government activities at all levels with a view to determining their economy and efficiency." The committee has assigned this responsibility, as it pertains to the Department of Health and Human Services (HHS), to the Subcommittee on Intergovernmental Relations and Human Resources.

Pursuant to its authority, the subcommittee conducted an oversight investigation of the Emergency Assistance Program (EA) of the Social Security Administration (SSA), an agency of HHS. In 1967, Congress amended Title I of the Social Security Act to establish EA as a component of the Aid to Families With Dependent Children Program (AFDC). EA was intended to respond expeditiously to the immediate and emergency needs of destitute families in ways AFDC, which has a lengthy, burdensome application process, could not. Like AFDC, EA is managed by State public assistance departments.

When the Senate Finance Committee issued its report upon the authorization of EA, it noted: "The Committee understands that the process of determining AFDC eligibility and authorizing payments frequently precludes the meeting of emergency needs when a crisis occurs. In the event of eviction, or when utilities are shut off, or when an alcoholic parent leaves children without food, immediate action is necessary." The report added that amending Title I was intended to "encourage public welfare agencies to move promptly and with maximum effectiveness in such situations."

EA is an optional program. States receiving Federal public assistance payments are not required to participate in EA; however, States which choose to receive EA funds are required to provide assistance to all eligible families within their jurisdictions. EA is a matching program, funding 50 percent of the costs of State emergency aid programs. The remaining 50 percent of EA expenses are the responsibility of the State.

Each State participating in EA establishes eligibility criteria for the program. Although the States have broad flexibility in setting criteria, they must adhere to the following minimum Federal requirements:

1. Funds are available only on behalf of a needy child under the age of 21 and any other member of the household in which he or she is living.
2. Such child must be living with relatives in a place of residence maintained by one or more responsible relatives, or had lived with the relatives within 6 months of the application for assistance.
3. Such child is without resources immediately accessible to meet his or her needs.
4. The emergency assistance is necessary to avoid destitution of such child or to provide living arrangements for the child in a home.
5. The child's destitution did not arise because he or she, or a responsible relative, refused, without good cause, employment or training for employment.

Today 28 States and jurisdictions operate EA programs. In 1981, EA benefits totaled $125 million. In 1985, the amount rose to $156 million, and SSA expected EA payments to reach $161 million in 1986. SSA paid half these EA costs.

As part of its continuing investigation of the Federal response to the homeless crisis, the subcommittee reviewed EA to determine the effectiveness of its management and whether the program was in adherence to applicable Federal laws and regulations.[1] The subcommittee also examined the magnitude of the problem of homeless families.

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[1] On April 18, 1985, the committee published its first report on the subcommittee's investigation, "The Federal Response to the Homeless Crisis," House Report 99-47. The subcommittee conducted hearings on homelessness in Washington, D.C., October 3, 1984; New York City, November 20, 1984; and Los Angeles, December 18, 1984.

The subcommittee's review included the inspection of EA records at SSA and the examination of private studies prepared by State and local government agencies. Subcommittee staff also reviewed material prepared by academic researchers, private advocacy groups, and shelter providers.

The subcommittee conducted a hearing on March 19, 1986. Witnesses at the hearing included SSA's Associate Commissioner for Family Assistance, representatives of the U.S. Conference of Mayors, an attorney for the National Coalition for the Homeless, shelter providers and members of homeless families.

II. THE CAUSES OF FAMILY HOMELESSNESS

1. SCARCITY OF LOW-INCOME HOUSING

In its 1985 report, "The Federal Response to the Homeless Crisis," the committee identified the scarcity of low-income housing as the leading cause of homelessness for individuals. The report stated:

> . . . the scarcity of low-income housing appears to be the main cause of homelessness. Poor people simply cannot afford the majority of available housing in the United States. The low-income housing supply is dwindling due to such factors as urban redevelopment, condominium conversions, decreased construction, increased demand from higher income renters and the virtual elimination of Federal funds from the construction of low-income housing.[2]

The shortage of affordable housing is also the main cause of homelessness among families. Families are a large percentage of the two and one-half million people who are displaced from their homes every year as a result of eviction, revitalization projects, economic development plans and spiraling rent inflation. While rents increase beyond reasonable costs, a half million units of low-rent dwellings are lost each year as a result of condominium conversions, abandonment, arson and demolition.[3]

The national housing shortage may exceed 1.7 million units by 1990.[4] In Boston, site of the first comprehensive study of homeless families, only 2 percent of apartments rent for less than $300 a month. Families registered with the Boston Housing Authority will have a minimum 2- to 3-year wait, and many will wait up to 12 years for housing. Even after such a long wait, available housing is substandard, temporary or excessively costly.[5]

Local housing shortages are compounded by the Federal Government's withdrawal from its commitment to build subsidized housing. A low-income housing specialist testified that the Federal Government:

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[2] House Report 99-47, April 18, 1985, p. 3.

[3] Ibid.

[4] Hearing before a subcommittee of the Committee on Government Operations, House of Representatives, "Emergency Aid to Families Program," March 19, 1986, hereinafter referred to as Hearing. Testimony of Ellen Bassuk, M.D., associate professor of psychiatry, Harvard Medical School, p. 73.

[5] Ibid.

> Is mounting a full scale retreat from the housing role it began to assume during the New Deal and has followed, however inadequately, over the last 50 years. Direct provision of housing for low- and moderate-income households, through Federal Government aided construction and rehabilitation programs, has come to a virtual halt. In 1985, only 5,000 units of conventional public housing were funded and the proposed fiscal year 1986 budget contains a 2-year moratorium on all additions to the subsidized housing stock.[6]

The shortage of low-income housing in the U.S., while dealing a devastating blow to poverty-stricken individuals in general, has an even greater impact on homeless families. Individuals can still rely to a limited extent on single room occupancy (SRO) units, even though the nation has lost more than 50 percent of its SRO stock in the last ten years. However, the housing needs of families are different and more expensive, and SRO's are simply not suitable for families. Therefore, homeless families have even less shelter available to them than homeless individuals, which renders families at greater risk of displacement, and provides them with less opportunities to recover from homelessness.

2. INADEQUATE INCOME OR PUBLIC ASSISTANCE BENEFITS

In 1970, one in 10 U.S. families were headed by females. By the year 2000, projections indicate that one in five U.S. families will be headed solely by females. Half of the female-headed families live below the poverty level.[7]

As divorce rates climb, and the numbers of single mothers and teenage pregnancy increase, the homeless family population will continue to grow. A large majority of female heads of households are untrained and unskilled. When they are eligible for employment, they only quality for jobs that do not pay enough to support a family. The combination of low income and exorbitant housing can make sustaining quality of life impossible for many single women with children.

The Boston homeless family study found that 85 percent of Massachusetts' homeless families are comprised of a single mother with 2.4 children.[8] The majority of these families were receiving AFDC benefits, but the level of payments was not sufficient to prevent homelessness. Between 1969 and 1980, AFDC benefits failed to keep pace with the inflation rate, lagging behind by approximately 56 percent in real dollars. In 1985, the poverty level for a family of three was defined as $8,850. Yet AFDC cash benefits combined with food stamps fell well below this level, at $7,000.[9]

Dr. Ellen Bassuk of Harvard University, director of the Boston study, testified before the subcommittee that "The facts speak for themselves. Without an external support network and an adequate, reliable source of income, it is virtually impossible for many families to avoid homelessness, even with governmental or social aid."[10]

The U.S. Conference of Mayors reported that local governments have identified insufficient public assistance benefits as a major cause of the increase in homeless families. A report by the Conference cited the concerns of local officials:

> Yonkers officials stated: "Federal and state entitlement guidelines are set unrealistically low and do not afford poor families enough money for both food and rent. Many families fall behind on their rent and become homeless; but most simply go hungry. Eighty-four percent of the people using the Hudson Place Soup Kitchen report missing meals because of lack of money, and they report missing an average of over 29 meals each month."
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> Seattle officials report that "public assistance and food stamp allotments have not adequately kept up with inflation. Cash assistance grants simply do not meet housing, utility and food expenses." Similarly in Detroit, "food stamp and other public assistance entitlements have not kept pace with inflation."
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> Related to low benefits are specific problems with the Food Stamp Program . . . Cleveland cites "changes in the eligibility criteria for food stamps which discourage use." In Seattle "those who do not have permanent living arrangements do not qualify for food stamps. Thus, many transients have to rely on food banks in order to get food." Detroit officials point out that "current regulations make it difficult for those in need to qualify for assistance and in many cases, since outreach dollars have been cut, some may not even be aware that they are qualified."[11]

The inadequacy of public assistance benefits, coupled with the scarcity of low-income housing, deals a double blow to poor families. This combination of factors leading to homelessness is exemplified in Boston, where AFDC allots $128 a month for housing at a time when the average rent is $530 a month and housing costs are rising at an annual rate of 37 percent.[12]

3. INCREASES IN PERSONAL CRISES

The traditional family structure, on which individuals in past generations had relied to weather personal crises, has eroded, leaving family members with nowhere to turn during times of trouble. Although most homeless families studied cited eviction or the unavailability of affordable housing as the reason for their homelessness, one-third of the homeless families surveyed indicated that a personal crisis, such as a dissolved relationship with a man, battering, death, or illness had caused their state of homelessness.[13]

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[6] Ibid. Testimony of Jetta Bernier, executive director, Massachusetts Committee for Children and Youth, p. 80.

[7] Ibid. Bassuk testimony, p. 73.

[8] Ibid.

[9] Ibid.

[10] Ibid., p. 74.

[11] "The Growth of Hunger, Homelessness and Poverty in America's Cities in 1985," United States Conference of Mayors, January 1986, pp. 7–8.

[12] Ibid., p. 9.

[13] Hearing, Bassuk testimony, p. 75.

With no support network on which to rely, these families, usually female-headed, become homeless very quickly.

Many of the women heading homeless families were themselves raised in broken homes. As a result, the women exhibit an inability to establish themselves autonomously. According to Dr. Bassuk, "Most had sporadic or nonexistent work histories, and no stable, reliable relationship or support. More than 50 percent of the mothers reported either no relationship or could name only one person with whom they had a relationship. Of the latter, many mentioned a recent shelter friend or a professional contact. More than 25 percent named their child as the major support." [14]

4. CUTS IN FEDERAL ASSISTANCE PROGRAMS

Over the past decades, the Federal Government, through a myriad of assistance programs, had worked to build a safety net on which poor families could rely to prevent their fall from the lower edges of poverty into homelessness. In recent years, cuts in Federal programs and other factors have combined to create the largest number of homeless families since the Depression.

The U.S. Bureau of the Census found that 8 million Americans lived below the poverty line between 1979 and 1982. One of the major factors causing the increase in poverty, found the Bureau, "may have been the tightening of eligibility standards for certain government aid programs." [15]

According to the Congressional Budget Office, "the poverty rate was 15.0 percent in 1982, up from 11.4 percent in 1978, or an increase in the number of poor persons from 24.5 million to 34.4 million. In fact, the 1982 rate is the highest in 15 years." [16] CBO concluded that cuts in Federal programs such as AFDC and Food Stamps contributed to the increase in poverty.[17]

The committee found in 1985 that cuts in Federal assistance programs had been a major cause of the increase in the overall U.S. homeless population. The committee believes this finding also applies to the current increase in the number of homeless families.

III. FINDINGS AND CONCLUSIONS

1. EMERGENCY ASSISTANCE PROGRAMS ARE UNABLE TO ADEQUATELY ADDRESS THE PROBLEM OF HOMELESS FAMILIES

The homeless population is difficult to count. The only method used to measure the homeless population in the U.S. has been the surveying of private and public shelter providers. However, most homeless people do not use shelter services. Even if a reliable method to count the number of homeless persons who do not use shelters was devised, many of the homeless would not respond to street surveys because they are unable to do so. Moreover, homeless people are transient, and would be difficult to locate.

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[14] Ibid.

[15] "Poverty Trends and Issues," the Bureau of the Census, October 18, 1983, p. 7.

[16] Statement of Rudolph G. Penner, Director, Congressional Budget Office, before the House Subcommittee on Oversight and the Subcommittee on Public Assistance and Unemployment Compensation of the Committee on Ways and Means, U.S. House of Representatives, October 18, 1983, p. 1.

[17] Ibid.

The two most widely quoted homeless population surveys contain figures ranging from a low of 350,000, estimated by the Department of Housing and Urban Development in 1984, to a count of 3 million estimated by the Community for Creative Non-Violence, a Washington, D.C. advocacy group, also in 1984.

SSA statistics may indicate that more than 100,000 family members a month are homeless in the U.S.[18] This figure is a total of only half the States and territories in the U.S. that participate in EA. The number for all States would be much higher, and would not include individuals who are homeless and not part of intact families.

Perhaps more meaningful than cold numbers are the stark sights that can be seen in the nation's largest cities. On any given night, observers can view masses of homeless people walking the streets or sleeping in public parks and train stations. At the same time, the public shelters in each of these cities are filled to capacity. Obviously, regardless of how large the homeless population really is, there are more homeless people than shelter beds.

In 1985, the committee reported that homelessness had been increasing in every city surveyed. The latest available information for 1986 indicates that the increase continues. For example, early in 1986, the U.S. Conference of Mayors released its survey of 25 large cities. The survey found that the demand for emergency shelter had increased in 90 percent of the cities surveyed, and had remained constant in the remaining 10 percent. The demand for shelter, the Conference reported, had increased by an average 25 percent across the country.[19]

In 60 percent of the cities surveyed by the Conference, emergency shelters routinely turned away homeless people because of insufficient beds or space.[20] In almost every city, officials expected homelessness to worsen, and no cities expected a decrease in the size of their respective homeless populations.[21]

During the 1980's, homelessness has been increasing by as much as 38 percent a year.[22] The fastest increase has been among homeless families. Families once represented a negligible portion of the overall homeless population, but now comprise nearly 28 percent of all homeless persons in the U.S.[23] Regarding this increase, the Conference found:

> Ninety-one percent . . . indicated that the composition of their homeless population has changed in recent years. The most significant difference has been a growing number of families with children, with 85 percent of the cities indicating an increase among this group. Increases in two-parent families are reported by Denver, Detroit, Louisville and Saint Paul. Denver officials note there are

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[18] According to SSA, EA serves 33,000 families a month. By multiplying that number by four, the approximate average size of a U.S. family, a total number of 132,000, is reached.

[19] Hearing, testimony of the Honorable Arthur J. Holland, mayor, Trenton, New Jersey, on behalf of the U.S. Conference of Mayors, p. 7.

[20] Ibid.

[21] Ibid.

[22] "Homelessness: A Complex Problem and the Federal Response," General Accounting Office, HRD-85-40, April 9, 1985, p. 10.

[23] Op. Cit., see footnote 11, p. 15.

> "more two parent families seeking shelter because of being unemployed or underemployed." Officials in Detroit and Kansas City indicate there are more women with young children who are homeless in those cities. In Boston, an average of 15 families become homeless every week. Families constitute the fastest growing group among homeless people in Phoenix. Chicago officials indicate "more families with children—families breaking down due to unemployment, stress, and abuse—are requesting shelter from the City." Other cities with increasing numbers of homeless families are Cleveland, Nashville, Salt Lake City, San Juan, Seattle, Trenton and Yonkers.[24]

Families comprise the majority of the homeless population in some cities. For example, families represent 80 percent of the homeless in Yonkers, New York, 66 percent of the population in New York City and 40 percent of the populations in Chicago and Boston.[25]

The Federal response to the plight of homeless families has been insufficient. The programs that had been used to prevent homelessness, such as AFDC and Food Stamps, have been unable to meet the need because of inflation and strict eligibility requirements.

The only Federal program specifically created to aid homeless families, EA, is used in only half the 52 eligible States and jurisdictions. Among the States not receiving EA funds are Colorado, Connecticut, Louisiana, Kentucky, South Carolina, Tennessee, Arizona and Utah.[26] Major cities in each of these States reported large increases in the numbers of homeless people. They include Denver, Hartford, New Orleans, Louisville, Charleston, Nashville, Phoenix and Salt Lake City.[27] With the exceptions of Hartford and Charleston, each of these cities also reported they were forced to turn homeless people away because they lacked sufficient shelter and food resources.[28] Nevertheless, their States have not opted to participate in EA.

States participating in EA are not required to use the program for all purposes allowed by Title I of the Social Security Act. Many of the States receiving EA severely restrict its use. Several States place limits on the amount of financial assistance available for homeless families.

The differences in the eligibility criteria from State to State are reflected in the numbers of homeless families served by each participant in EA. For example, New York and California have the largest homeless populations. Each State's largest city, New York City and Los Angeles, have approximately 40,000 to 50,000 homeless people, according to local surveys. Both States participate in EA. Yet New York, with more liberal eligibility requirements, provided emergency assistance to an average 4,473 families a month in 1985. California, with the strictest eligibility criteria in the country, provided aid to an average 734 families a month.[29] Even less populated States such as Oklahoma and West Virginia served more families. A single city, Washington, D.C., also served more families under EA than the entire State of California.[30]

Most of the EA funds in California are used for abused children and runaways.[31] Destitute families in need of assistance, whose children are not abused or neglected, do not usually qualify for EA in the State. This situation, combined with California's AFDC requirements, has created a Catch-22 situation in the State which leaves homeless families with the options of either breaking up their family to qualify for aid, or receiving no assistance at all. The problem was explained by Gary Blasi, an attorney for the Legal Aid Foundation of Los Angeles:

> The only emergency shelter in Los Angeles is that provided as an emergency benefit of the general relief assistance program. The general relief program is restricted to persons who are ineligible for every other kind of program. Thus, homeless families are denied emergency shelter in this county because they are theoretically eligible for AFDC.
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> Homeless families are told when they apply for general relief to go down the street and apply for AFDC. They are also told that they have to have an address in order to apply for AFDC, in violation of what I understand the Federal regulations to be.
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> If homeless families succeed in receiving assistance, that assistance consists of $100 for a period which may last up to 45 days. $100 in this county will buy you about 2 days or 3 days of food and shelter and that's it for a family of three or four.
>
> As a result, many of the homeless families in this county don't even apply for AFDC. For that reason and also because they are afraid of losing their children. It is a very ugly scenario and is repeated daily in this county.
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> A homeless family applies for assistance. The social worker decides the children are in danger because they are living in a car. The police are called. The children are taken and placed in a place called McLaren Hall, which is a kind of warehouse for the children that we run in the county. And then at some point, the children are taken away and put in a foster home. Then a kind of tragedy begins. The parents are no longer eligible for AFDC because they don't have any dependent children because the police have removed them. So, they receive nothing, the children are permanently placed in some sort of a foster care situation. The family is destroyed.[32]

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[24] Ibid., p. 16.

[25] Ibid.

[26] Hearing, testimony of the Honorable Ted Weiss, chairman, Subcommittee on Intergovernmental Relations and Human Resources, p. 30.

[27] Op. Cit., see footnote 11, p. 27.

[28] Ibid.

[29] Emergency Assistance: Number of Cases, Fiscal Year 1985, Office of Family Assistance, Social Security Administration, February 13, 1986.

[30] Ibid.

[31] Hearing, testimony of Jo Anne B. Ross, p. 33.

[32] Hearings before a subcommittee of the Committee on Government Operations, House of Representatives, "The Federal Response to the Homeless Crisis," October 3, November 20, and December 18, 1984, testimony of Gary Blasi, p. 1116.

Other States participating in EA are also not able to provide shelter to all homeless families, despite Federal requirements that all destitute families receive shelter. According to the National Coalition for the Homeless, Delaware turns away 50 percent of the families who seek shelter, the State of Washington only provides shelter to one in 10 homeless families, and in Chicago, 65 percent of homeless people turned away from shelter are families.[33]

In States with a greater commitment to providing emergency aid to homeless families, the shelter provided to parents and children is often unsafe and inhumane. For example, a major participant in EA is the State of New York. The State received more than $21.7 million in its Federal share of EA funding during fiscal year 1985, more than one-fourth of the total $81.4 million spent nationwide.[34] But because of an inflexibility in the EA law, which does not allow Federal funds to be used for the construction, purchase, rental, or rehabilitation of new emergency shelter, the funds must be spent on existing shelter. The existing shelter in New York City mainly consists of congregate, barrack-style shelters and SRO welfare hotels, both of which are totally inadequate to meet the needs of the 15,300 family members, including 10,000 children, currently in need of emergency shelter.[35]

Many of the shelters and hotels are located in dangerous neighborhoods, and are breeding grounds for criminal activities such as prostitution and illegal drug dealing. The Legal Aid Society of New York conducted tests, and found that homeless families in one shelter had been exposed to lead and asbestos contamination.[36] At another hotel, city officials found nearly 1,000 violations of health, building and housing codes.[37] On March 7, 1986, a hotel for the homeless was cited by the City Health Department for numerous violations of city health laws after an outbreak of gastrointestinal illnesses among children residing there.[38]

In 1984, the Citizens Committee for Children of New York, a respected children's rights organization, conducted an inspection of New York shelters and hotels for homeless families. They found that 70 percent of the families living in the emergency facilities had no cooking facilities, one-third did not have beds and related sleeping needs, and more than half were not provided cribs for infants. Rooms with broken windows and peeling lead paint were being assigned to families in the hotels, and hotels which house drug dealers and prostitutes are used as emergency shelter for families.[39]

In New York's Nassau County, the situation is not much better. A 1984 investigation by the County's District Attorney's Office found "serious deficiencies in the quality of shelter that is provided

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[33] Hearing, testimony of Maria Foscarinis, p. 60.

[34] Emergency Assistance, Aid to Families with Dependent Children, Fiscal Year 1985, State 41 Data, Social Security Administration, January 8, 1986.

[35] Figures provided by New York City Department of Human Resources.

[36] "Lead Hazards are Cited in Shelter for Homeless," New York Times, March 11, 1986.

[37] "Nearly 1,000 Violations Cited at a Hotel for the Homeless," New York Times, November 5, 1985.

[38] Hearing, testimony of the Honorable Ted Weiss, p. 48.

[39] "7,900 Homeless Children: The Crisis Continues," Citizens Committee for Children of New York, Inc., October 1984.

those seeking emergency housing."[40] The investigation found that homeless families who the County had believed were sheltered at one facility were actually residing at a boarding home in another location. Both buildings were owned by the same absentee landlord. The building where the homeless families lived was:

> A rat and roach infested building, with broken and boarded up windows and walls, with grossly insufficient and broken plumbing, backed up sewage and other severe structural defects. The rear basement door has been torn off, and the house is open to weather and other intrusions. Large and dangerous debris and abandoned automobile wrecks were scattered around the yard. In this house, fourteen separate people were required to live in four bedrooms, with as many as four persons to a small room. One man was placed in the attic.[41]

At another county shelter for homeless families, boarders:

> Complained of daily violence and narcotics dealing on the premises.
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> Broken walls and holes exist throughout the house, many of which were stuffed with rags to prevent free access by the rats which infest the building.[42]

The District's Attorney's report summed up a condition that could, based on the subcommittee's investigation, apply to other locations across the country which receive EA funds:

> Serious questions are raised concerning both the Department of Social Services subsidy of grossly inadequate and illegal housing and its failure to provide any apparatus to assist local authorities to insure health and safety codes are met.
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> Clearly, the various levels of government are working in conflict. Public monies should not be spent to subvert public statues. While the Nassau County Department of Social Services is under immense pressure, both legal (from Federal and State judges and officials), as well as personal (from daily crises of the Department of Social Services clients themselves), to use any available shelter for Department of Social Services clients, bureaucratic responses, however seemingly practical, are no substitute for fulfillment of the law.[43]

The web of inter-related Federal, State and local emergency assistance available to homeless families has caught destitute families seeking relief in a trap that only leads downward to a break-up of the family structure. As Sandra Brawders, the executive director of a family shelter in Washington, D.C., told the subcommittee:

> We are currently standing by and watching the complete disintegration of the only unit of support that poor

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[40] "District Attorney's Report Concerning Nassau County Department of Social Services Emergency Housing Placement," May 10, 1984, p. 3.

[41] Ibid., p. 5.

[42] Ibid., p. 7.

[43] Ibid., pp. 11-12.

> Americans have, and that is the family. We have created solutions that take children away from their mothers because it's easier. We have created more shelters for single adult males and females rather than for families because it is easier. And we have expected mothers to support a child with an extra $51 a month in a public assistance check, and yet will give a foster parent six times that amount per month to take care of the same child, or $60 per day for an infant placed in a [foster care] facility . . . because it's easier.
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> Homeless mothers are not a large voting bloc, and neither are their children, yet, and the cumulative effect of not solving these enormous injustices will result in a clear view of family for only the rich. The poor do not have to be with us always, and if the poor are predominantly women and children, which every study is currently telling us, we are a very sorry nation.[44]

Studies indicate that a majority of homeless families are victims of societal failures. Many homeless families are headed by single female parents, who themselves were abused as children, and abused again by the fathers of their children. It was not government assistance programs that caused their homelessness. But it seems that government programs will often perpetuate their state of homelessness or poverty. Two witnesses at the subcommittee's hearing are tragic examples of this. One, Sally Lovett, a single parent and a resident at the House of Ruth shelter for homeless women in Washington, D.C., was placed in juvenile homes at the age of 15 because her parents abused and neglected her. After leaving the juvenile homes, she had a relationship with a man who fathered her child. The man is now in prison. With a young child to raise, no employment skills, and no family support network, Sally became homeless.[45]

She receives public assistance checks, but they will not cover rent and food for her and her child. She is unable to obtain free day care because her child suffers from seizures, and day care centers will not take responsibility for watching the child if and when Sally can obtain employment. She has been cut off public assistance twice for failure to file monthly reports, and at the time of the subcommittee's hearing, had been living at the shelter for nine months. ". . . ever since the age of 15, I've been down this road of bad," she testified. "Nothing has turned up good." [46] She said the local Department of Human Services is "not doing too much for me. They might be trying, but it's not helping. I think what they need, what needs to be done is that they need to provide more funding for people, for families, for mothers with dependent children so they could get back up on their feet."[47]

Seleda Joyce Mumphrey was a student at Georgetown University when she became pregnant. ". . . I thought that by May 1988, I would be graduating," she testified, "but when I went home for

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[44] Hearing, testimony of Sandra Brawders, executive director, House of Ruth Shelter, p. 66.
[45] Ibid., testimony of Sally Lovett, p. 68.
[46] Ibid.
[47] Ibid.

Christmas and I told my mother that I was pregnant, she did what people did back in the forties. She just said: Get out. By that time, I was like 5 months pregnant . . ." With nowhere to turn, she went to a homeless shelter. She needed immediate public assistance, but could not obtain it because of delays in the application process. She entered a work training program, but was rejected because she was pregnant. She tried to have her child put in a public nursery so she could work during the day, but was told the nursery only accepted the children of mentally ill women. She applied for day care for her child, but was informed public day care centers only accepted children over the age of two.[48]

Despite their terrible situations, Sally and Seleda are more fortunate than many other homeless mothers. They at least have a place to live. In Washington, D.C., where Sally and Seleda live, the House of Ruth is the only 24-hour shelter for homeless women with children. The shelter has a waiting list of 39 pregnant women who are homeless. These women have shelters to sleep in, but must walk the streets by day, and are not getting proper nutrition or medical care in a city that has the highest infant mortality rate in the country.[49]

2. HHS HAS FAILED TO FOLLOW ITS REGULATIONS ON MONITORING, REVIEWING AND AUDITING THE EA PROGRAM

The increase in the number of homeless families has created a boom industry for shelter operators in New York City. Slumlords who own welfare hotels where the City places homeless families take in as much as $3,000 a month to house a single family in a squalid room.[50] Meanwhile the City's public assistance guidelines allow a family of three $247 a month for rental housing.[51]

In Washington, D.C., the local government pays similar amounts to lodge homeless families at the Pitts Hotel, the Capitol's rundown welfare hotel for the homeless. In Washington, homeless families are allowed $257 a month in public assistance.[52]

Under EA, the Federal Government pays half of the costs of the exorbitant and dangerous welfare hotels for homeless families, and also subsidizes the paltry public assistance allotments. The inequities and waste of Federal funds are condoned by HHS, which allows State governments a totally free hand in administering the EA Program, despite Federal regulations which require HHS to monitor, review and audit State administration of EA to ensure the program is managed effectively and in accordance with Federal law.

Title 45 CFR § 201.10(a) states:

> In order to provide a basis for determining that State agencies are adhering to Federal requirements and to the substantive legal and administrative provisions of their approved plans, the Service [HHS] conducts a review of State and local public assistance administration. This review in-

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[48] Ibid.
[49] Ibid., testimony of Sandra Brawders, p. 70.
[50] Ibid., testimony of Maria Foscarinis, p. 61.
[51] Information supplied to the subcommittee by the National Coalition for the Homeless.
[52] Hearing, testimony of Sandra Brawders, p. 70.

cludes analysis of procedures and policies of State and local agencies and examination of case records of individual recipients.

Despite this requirement, the subcommittee investigation found that HHS has never objected to the types of Federally-funded shelter in which State agencies and local governments have housed homeless families.

Title 45 CFR 201.12(a) states:

> Annually, or at such frequencies as are considered necessary and appropriate, the operations of the State agency are audited by representatives of the Audit Agency of the Department [HHS]. Such audits are made to determine whether the State agency is being operated in a manner that:
>
> (1) Encourages prudent use of program funds, and
>
> (2) Provides a reasonable degree of assurance that funds are being properly expended, and for the purposes for which appropriated and provided for under the related Act and State plan, including State laws and regulations.

The regulations clearly call for audits, yet when the subcommittee requested copies of all audits performed of the EA Program for the period January 1, 1981, to January 1, 1986, it was informed by HHS that "No financial audits have been conducted during this time period." [53]

Title 45 CFR 205.40(b) requires that State agencies have a "continuing system of quality control" over their public assistance programs, including EA, and that quality control reviews be submitted to HHS. But, according to the SSA Associate Commissioner for Family Assistance, "There is no quality control requirement for the Emergency Assistance Program."[54] SSA explained that quality control is based on statistical samples, and because EA is small in comparison to other SSA programs, quality assurance would be "a burdensome requirement for a program that small."[55]

The committee finds HHS' failure to adequately monitor the use of EA funds to be a totally unacceptable dereliction of its responsibility to ensure that Federal monies are not only spent properly, but are expended in a manner consistent with the law. The intent of Congress in amending Title I of the Social Security Act was to aid families in need of emergency assistance. Allowing Federal funds to be spent on unsafe shelter at exorbitant costs disregards Congressional intent. The committee believes that HHS must guarantee that every State participating in EA provide emergency services to all homeless families eligible for such aid, but that assistance must be safe and humane. HHS has failed to meet the requirements of the law.

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[53] Ibid., testimony of the Honorable Ted Weiss, p. 36.

[54] Ibid., testimony of Jo Anne B. Ross, p. 41.

[55] Ibid.

3. THE SHELTER SYSTEM FOR HOMELESS FAMILIES CURRENTLY FUNDED BY EA IS DESTRUCTIVE TO FAMILIES, HARMFUL TO CHILDREN AND MAY BE PERPETUATING LONG-TERM HOMELESSNESS AMONG FAMILIES

The tragic irony of EA is that, despite its good intent, it may be funding programs that contribute to and perpetuate family homelessness. This finding is supported by the subcommittee's investigation and the first in-depth study ever conducted of homeless families by researchers at Harvard Medical School.

The Harvard study found that social inequities, family crises and the inadequacies of the welfare and shelter systems have apparently foreordained homelessness for families. The case of Linda, the head of a homeless family and a subject of the study, is typical of the cases examined by the Harvard researchers. According to Dr. Bassuk:

> Linda was born in Tennessee. Her mother, a chronic alcoholic with manic-depressive illness, worked intermittently as a maid. As a result, Linda was cared for by an elderly woman who frequently left her alone. At age 4, her mother reclaimed her and moved the entire family to Boston. Linda remembers her mother calling her names, beating her with sticks, and locking her in the closet. Unable to tolerate the continuous abuse, she became a runaway at age 8. During the next 3 years, she wandered the streets and was temporarily placed in department of youth services facilities, but always returned to mother who severely beat her.
>
> Since that time, she has never lived anywhere for longer than 2 years. At the age of 11, she was sent to the New England Home for Little Wanderers for 2 years. By then she no longer cared about anything and felt nothing. At age 13, she was placed with a foster family where the father sexually abused her.
>
> Feeling helpless and hopeless, she made a serious suicide attempt at age 15. An older sister took her in, but when she became pregnant and refused to have an abortion, her sister threw her out. Desperate and frightened and with no place to go, she lived on the streets and in abandoned, rat-infested buildings.
>
> She gave birth to Tommy 3 years ago. Since that time, they have lived in 12 different places—in the apartments of several sisters, her mother, friends, and a boyfriend in Florida, in abandoned buildings and in three family shelters. Until recently, Linda disciplined her son by beating him, but stopped when he seemed frightened most of the time. On evaluation, Tommy manifested major problems in every area of development, including language, fine and gross motor skills, and social relationships. He has a developmental age of approximately 2 years and is already a full year behind.
>
> Without work skills or a high school education, Linda's future is bleak. She currently receives $328 per month from AFDC, has Medicaid, food stamps, and [a] 707 certificate.

> Despite her son's urgent needs and the intensive help she has received from the shelter staff, she has not found stable housing or a day care program for him. With the exception of the department of public welfare, who gives her a check, she has no contact with any social service agency.[56]

Most of the homeless families included in the Harvard study came from backgrounds similar to Linda's. Eighty-five percent of the families studied were headed by women on AFDC. The majority of the women lived in unstable situations prior to coming to the shelters. Approximately 33 percent of the families had lived in other emergency shelters, 50 percent having lived in hotels, and 85 percent had been doubled up with relatives or friends in overcrowded apartments.[57]

Nearly 60 percent of the families became homeless because of eviction, nonpayment of rent, condominium conversions and overcrowding. Almost one-third also described a personal crisis as precipitating homelessness, such as dissolution of a relationship with an alcoholic, battering and death or illness within the nuclear family.[58]

Although economic factors appeared to be the central cause of family homelessness, two-thirds of the families interviewed were headed by individuals who had grown up in broken homes. Many of these individuals exhibit an inability to function as adults. Most had sporadic or nonexistent work histories, and no stable, reliable relationships or supports.[59]

In commenting on the study, Dr. Bassuk noted:

> Poverty itself erodes a person's self-esteem and confidence and creates feelings of despair and alienation. When poverty is coupled with the breakdown of family structure and values, its effects are more pernicious. Those who lack the early nurturance of a mothering figure, have been abused, have lived in chaos during their formative years, or who lack positive role models, often manifest this profound deprivation by developing behavioral disorders later on in life.[60]

The prevailing evidence of this study and other case studies examined by the subcommittee indicates that emergency shelters funded by the Federal Government often are not the paths to better lives, but traps from which homeless families cannot escape. The children raised in these shelters and welfare hotels may be the next generation of the homeless. When asked about the adequacy of the shelters, Dr. Bassuk testified that the shelters "need far more services. The needs of the children are not attended to, except in certain unique situations. Many of these children are not in school. The stresses of shelter life are intense. The children mirror the inadequacies of the shelter in their discussions of suicide, their high levels of anxiety, and their impairment in developmental milestones. Many of the children we saw also had sleeping and eating disorders."[61]

The effect of shelters on children is the most alarming finding of the Harvard study. Dr. Lenore Rubin of Harvard Medical School testified:

> Given a mother's pervasive and chronic emotional disabilities, it is not surprising that the children manifest a wide range of emotional, social, and cognitive difficulties, as well as lags in developmental milestones. The children's problems are heightened by the stress of repeated disruptions, most currently, living in a shelter where there is little privacy and overcrowding. A mother's distress about her homelessness is naturally communicated to her children. Because of the absence of a second parent, and the lack of child care in the majority of shelters, mothers often spend 24 hours a day with their small children. School provides some relief for the older children. Generally, the shelter atmosphere is tense and sometimes explodes into episodes of abuse.[62]

The Harvard study found that 47 percent of the preschoolers in shelters had severe developmental impairments. The children had difficulty with language, motor, social and personal development skills.[63]

Fifty-four percent of school-age children studied were clinically depressed. Most of them had suicidal thoughts, and suffered from severe anxiety.[64]

All available evidence indicates that the shelters and welfare hotels partially funded by the Federal Government are environments which are doing irreparable harm to the children staying in them. These are not all the homeless children. Because of the scarcity of shelter, many homeless families are turned away from shelter, or do not attempt to find safe havens. The emotional and physical damage done to these children of the streets has not been gauged, but must be intense and horrible.

The committee believes that in the face of the evidence, the Federal Government must at least assume responsibility for the outcomes of the programs it administers, such as EA. HHS must work with State and local governments in providing adequate shelter for the homeless.

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[56] Ibid., p. 74.
[57] Ibid., p. 75.
[58] Ibid.
[59] Ibid.
[60] Ibid., p. 76.

[61] Ibid., p. 82.
[62] Ibid., testimony of Lenore Rubin, Ph.D., Harvard Medical School, p. 77.
[63] Ibid.
[64] Ibid., p. 78.

IV. Recommendations

1. HHS SHOULD FOLLOW ITS REGULATIONS AND AUDIT, REVIEW, AND MONITOR THE EA PROGRAM TO ENSURE THAT EMERGENCY SHELTER FUNDED BY THE FEDERAL GOVERNMENT IS SUFFICIENT TO PROTECT THE HEALTH AND WELL BEING OF MEMBERS OF HOMELESS FAMILIES, AND IS ALSO COST EFFECTIVE

The attitude of HHS officials is that the problem of homeless families and the management of the EA Program are solely within the purview of State and local governments. This attitude has resulted in the inadequate and often inhumane treatment of members of homeless families. State and local governments often do not have the resources to provide even minimal shelter to all homeless families. They also lack the expertise and, in some cases, the commitment, to plan and deliver proper services to homeless families in need of assistance. The Federal Government should take the lead in directing a national relief effort for homeless families, using an already existing program, EA. Until this occurs, the plight of homeless families will worsen, and their numbers will continue to increase. HHS should use its existing regulatory powers to reform emergency aid efforts for homeless families in the U.S.

2. USING EA FUNDS, IN CONJUNCTION WITH STATE AND LOCAL BUDGETS, HHS SHOULD DEVELOP A MODEL SHELTER PROGRAM FOR HOMELESS FAMILIES

The current shelter system for homeless families is not only inadequate, it is detrimental to its residents. Alternative, multi-faceted shelters would not only be of greater benefit to the homeless, they would be less expensive than the exorbitant welfare hotels and congregate shelters currently being used. A model system would begin with sanitary shelter offering a modicum of privacy for families. Such a shelter would serve nutritious food, and would also offer day care, employment counseling and medical services. Because of the generally dysfunctional state of most homeless families, a model shelter should offer multi-disciplinary case management that would evaluate each family according to its emotional, physical and personal problems, and recommend a therapeutic plan of assistance that will eventually lift families from their long-term state of homelessness. HHS has the resources to establish such a shelter, which could then be a model for all State and local governments attempting to combat the homeless crisis. It should use them.

3. HHS SHOULD CONDUCT AN OUTREACH AND EDUCATION PROGRAM TO INFORM THOSE STATES NOT PARTICIPATING IN EA, BUT WHICH HAVE HOMELESS PROBLEMS, ABOUT THE BENEFITS AND USES OF THE EA PROGRAM TO ENCOURAGE STATES TO USE THE FEDERAL EMERGENCY FUNDING

Only half the States and territories eligible for EA participate in the program. Although many of these jurisdictions do not have substantial numbers of homeless families, several of them have large homeless family populations, and lack resources to adequately provide assistance, HHS should conduct an outreach effort to ensure that all States not participating in the EA Program are aware of its benefits in order to make the most informed decision possible about opting for EA assistance.

4. HHS SHOULD USE EA PROGRAM STATISTICS AS A PARTIAL BASIS FOR COUNTING THE NUMBERS OF HOMELESS FAMILIES

There is a great controversy concerning the actual numbers of homeless people in the U.S. No studies have accurately assessed the problem and, indeed, because of the transient nature of the homeless and their reluctance to talk to census takers, it may be impossible to make a precise count of the population. HHS figures show that 33,000 homeless families a month are receiving EA. However, HHS does not know how many individuals this figure represents, and how many of the 33,000 are carried from month to month. The EA Program represents an excellent opportunity for the Federal Government to conduct an accurate census at least of the homeless families participating in EA. They do not represent all homeless people, or even all homeless families. Only half the States and territories use EA. But a survey of EA recipients will at least be a starting point.

5. THE PRESIDENT SHOULD ISSUE AN EXECUTIVE ORDER DECLARING HOMELESSNESS A NATIONAL EMERGENCY AND REQUIRE THE FEDERAL GOVERNMENT TO COORDINATE ALL EXISTING RESOURCES TO PROVIDE IMMEDIATE EMERGENCY ASSISTANCE AND LONG-TERM SOLUTIONS TO THE CRISIS OF THE HOMELESS

This is the second report issued during the 99th Congress by the committee on homelessness. Since the committee's first report in April 1985, homelessness has increased, particularly among families. The first report recommended that the President issue an executive order to coordinate Federal assistance efforts. This recommendation calls for no new programs, although they are needed, but simply asks the President to seek coordination of existing programs, such as EA, that can be used to alleviate the plight of the homeless. The President ignored the committee's first recommendation. An HHS task force on the homeless, created to coordinate Federal relief efforts, has slowed to a virtual halt. The administration continues to ignore the problem of the homeless at the same time the problem worsens. Again, we ask the President to recognize the crisis, and work with the Congress in providing help in areas where local resources are insufficient.

6. CONGRESS SHOULD AMEND TITLE I OF THE SOCIAL SECURITY ACT TO ALLOW EA TO BE USED FOR THE CONSTRUCTION, PURCHASE, RENTAL, AND REHABILITATION OF EMERGENCY SHELTERS FOR HOMELESS FAMILIES

HHS is funding dangerous and exorbitant shelters primarily because adequate alternatives do not exist in most U.S. cities. Expensive, inadequate shelter wastes Federal dollars and perpetuates the condition of homelessness. Congress should recognize this problem by amending Title I to allow EA to be used for the creation of new shelters. In the long run, this section would save Federal and local funds, and encourage more States to participate in EA.

Section VII

A Service Model for Homeless Families

Massachusetts Organization of State Funded Shelter Providers

A Service Model For Homeless Families

Massachusetts Organization of State Funded Shelter Providers

August 1986

A Service Model for Homeless Families

In the state of Massachusetts there are approximately twenty-two permanent shelters for families with a combined approximate total of 560 beds that are funded by the Department of Public Welfare. While most of the shelters began as an emergency response to provide meals and a temporary place to stay for homeless families, many have since evolved into a "community within the community", a small but significant circle of support within the wider circle of life tasks and goals that need to be negotiated and renegotiated if the family is to survive as a healthy unit and move towards self-sufficiency and independence.

This report attempts to describe a model of service delivery for homeless families which has evolved in the State of Massachusetts since the early 1980s. Collaboration among shelter providers and a healthy relationship with the Department of Public Welfare has facilitated the evolution of this unique service model. Among shelter providers there is a shared belief in the creative service model which applies to all shelters yet allows for programmatic autonomy and diversity as shelters respond to distinct populations within their communities.

Causes of Homelessness

The causes of homelessness are embedded in the social and economic structure of our society. Factors such as cuts in public assistance programs, a decline in the low income housing supply, personal crises (ranging from breakup of households usually due to overcrowding, to domestic violence, health problems and arson) and unemployment create enormous risks for families. Poor individuals and families find themselves in shrinking ghettoes, eroding amidst urban revival. Dependent on fixed incomes for public assistance benefits, they are without sufficient resources to compete for apartments in an ever shrinking market of affordable housing.

Approximately ninety percent in homeless shelters are recipients of public assistance monies. These monies are well below the poverty level. Families receiving public assistance are particularly in danger of homelessness, especially those who are ineligible for or unable to attain housing assistance from Federal, State, or local sources. As a result of the low levels of housing assistance offered to the poorest in the State, the Department of Public Welfare in its FY 1987 budget request reported that over sixty-five percent of all families on welfare were reportedly paying over three-fourths of their monthly income on rent. Many of these families will soon be homeless if immediate assistance is not available in the form of rent subsidies.

For a variety of reasons the State's housing stock does not meet the needs of its citizens. Some of the reasons identified for the housing shortage include unaffordable costs in an escalating real estate market, uninhabitable conditions, and discrimination by landlords. Arson, condominium conversion, and the decline in the availability of Federal funds for new housing initiatives are also key factors. The housing market has tightened while costs have escalated. And, there has been insufficient intervention to either increase employment and earnings for those least able to secure shelter independently. The Executive Office of Community Development estimates that in 1986 the State of Massachusetts will fall short of 12,000 units the number it needs to house all of its citizens. The result of this shortcoming is most obvious in the increasing number of homeless people.

While provision of decent affordable, appropriate housing would not, by itself eliminate all the problems of those who are homeless, for most the lack of housing is the main problem. Often various personal problems can be directly attributed to the traumatic experience of losing a stable residence and being forced for weeks, months or even years, to move from one temporary residence to another. For some people, a decent, secure, affordable residential program is essential for restoring normalcy to their lives. All people, however must be guaranteed the right to habitable, affordable, non-transient housing.

There can be no doubt that the Commonwealth of Massachusetts has one of the most progressive and humane programs in the country for its homeless citizens. It is now both necessary and possible to develop a comprehensive and consistent policy on homelessness which will serve as the foundation for program development and long term solutions to homelessness. Such a policy is necessary because of the structured and systemic causes of homelessness, and the need to ensure that those structures and systems prevent homelessness, not cause it. Such a policy is now possible because of the experience of all who are working for the end of homelessness, especially those who are working in shelters, and the cumulative knowledge and understanding such experience brings.

Profile of Homeless Families

"Homeless" is a situation not a population. What all homeless people have in common is that they lack what society defines as a "normal" place of their own to live. While many are what we might call the "new poor" - catapulted into shelters because of economic/housing crises - others are victims of intergenerational poverty and its long-term debilitating effects on individuals and families. In addition to their lack of control within the wider economic marketplace, these individuals and families are often personally isolated. The shelter is the final destination in a downward spiral, the place in which the family lands when the service system has failed it.

Service Delivery Model

In the early 1980s the Massachusetts Department of Public Welfare began to encourage the growth of family shelter programs throughout the Commonwealth. As it is impossible to describe the typical homeless family, it is equally impossible to give a prototype of the typical family shelter. This is because shelters have maintained individual, regional and programmatic autonomy in creatively addressing the variety of issues confronting families.

Shelter providers acknowledge, however, that the overall thrust of family sheltering adhere to a common approach, which is described in the Service Model for Homeless Families. The seeds of this skeletal model are present within all shelters, and there is a strong commitment to develop and expand efforts of both staff and guests of family shelters. And, it is a response to primal needs which we believe serves as a unique alternative to a clinical model.

On the following page is a graphic description of the model. At the center of the model/wheel is the Homeless Family. The Family is central to the decision-making process for every aspect of the model. The spokes surrounding the family are the Internal Shelter Team. The functions described are essential to every shelter, but they may be addressed differently in every shelter. For example, in one shelter there may be a staff person who is responsible for each function, while in another, several functions may be in contrast to others. (The case studies in the appendix describe the different approaches among shelters.) The outer circle represents the External Team, the wider systems with which the family and the Internal Team must be linked and integrated. The Internal Team, in collaboration with the Family, access the outer circle.

The Model establishes a framework for the development of a "system" to service homeless individuals and families. Its goal is to encourage the building of bonds between the family and the wider community by providing the necessary support to enable the family to develop its own strengths and coping skills in order to negotiate the wider systems. It also illustrates the need for the Family and Internal Team to advocate together with the wider systems. A circular model, unlike a linear model which has a clear beginning and end point, epitomizes the sphere of dynamic transactional influence of the self (individual, family, community) on the environment and the environment on the self, and depicts the continuity and growth of the family developmental process.

The circle between the Internal and External Teams is essential for successful planning. The Family is at the hub of this process which consists of four ongoing steps: Evaluation, Assessment, Planning and Implementation. The Evaluation step is inclusive of a systemic approach, identifying individual, family and societal issues of concern for a given family. The Assessment step, done collaboratively with the Family, is the selection of primary needs to be addressed and the family's strengths, resources and coping skills. The Planning step defines the strategies to be used in addressing the family's concerns and in Implementing a process to deal with those concerns. The tools of this process are the initial interviewing process, the family care plan, team conferences and the ongoing process of Evaluation. The Key to the success of this process is the centrality of the Family to the planning process.

The Model also questions "Where do Families Come From" and "Where do Families Go". Where families come from is identified earlier in this paper (in the section on Causes of Homelessness) and identified homelessness as rooted in the economic and societal conditions of poverty. The question of where families go must include a systemic response, for without this systemic effort that includes access to affordable housing, families could return to similar situations from which they came.

Philosophy of Service

The success of this alternative model is due to the shelter's ability to integrate the following elements of a philosophy of service.

An Ideology of Empowerment: The family is at the center of the circle and included in every aspect of the plan for its present and future. There is an inherent process of ongoing assessment within the shelter to define strengths, skills and needs. From the assessment comes an understanding of the individual - child, adult, family--which is critical in the planning and implementation of tasks, goals and objectives. Within the wider context of individual/family growth and development, there is also evaluation of the community. In-depth evaluation that is both honest and inclusive of the family and the support system necessarily leads to continued assessment, new plans, further implementation and ongoing evaluation.

A Holistic Understanding of Health: The assessment of the family includes a holistic understanding of health as it applies to the individual, the family unit and its integration into the wider society. We believe that all persons have the right to life, to bodily integrity and to the means which are necessary and suitable for the proper development of life: food, clothing, shelter, rest, medical care and necessary social services. We are committed to assisting people in the provision and attainment of these primary rights wherever they have been deprived of them.

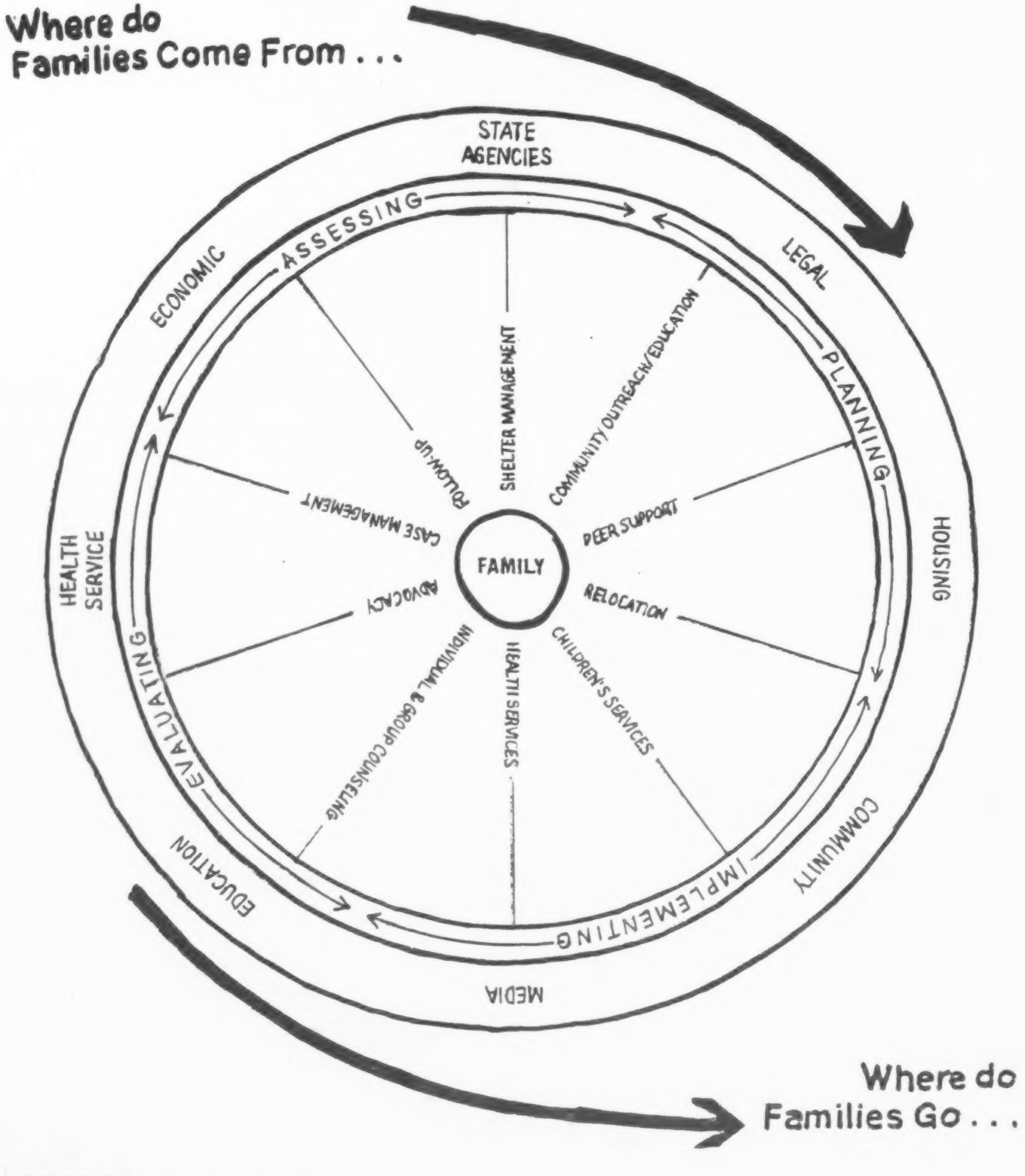
Team Model of Service Delivery: Shelter staff operate as an internal team. The tools of this team are the family care plan, team conferences and the ongoing process of assessment, planning, implementation and evaluation which happens with the family. Members of the internal team seek to access, in a collaborative way, the resources of the wider community.

An Ecological Model of Service Delivery: The service delivery model is a collaborative endeavor with an array of services, programs, community groups and organizations. Its process is based upon the belief that shelters are not to be institutionalized. Rather, through collaboration with public and private agencies, and advocacy for permanent housing and support services, shelters will eventually become unnecessary. The shelter, in effect, acts as a broker to help families move through the "system" more effectively. That there is a need for shelters to exist at all points to the fact that the wider "system" is not working. Nevertheless, the shelter, as a temporary "system" in and of itself, is overall, an effective model of service delivery. Therefore, an important element of the shelter's delivery of service is to analyze how and why the larger system is not working and to work towards incremental, legislative, and eventually systematic change. Community education is a vital part of this process.

A Relational Environment (characterized as an extended family or community): Perhaps the greatest strength of the family shelter is its relational context--a potential "community within the community"--to persons who have long known the experience of social isolation. Within the context of the shelter people learn to regain self-esteem, to develop trust, to improve their ability to enter into mutually caring relationships and conventional middle-class methods of support and counseling. The possibilities of this alternative relational milieu within the shelter needs to be further explored and developed. For the families who can benefit from this model, that will enable them to break through the "cycle of poverty/homelessness." Peer support is a key factor in this process as well as role modeling, family life education, access to individual/group counseling, children's services and health services.

Follow-Up: Intrinsic to this model is the follow-up component that helps families to continue to build upon their strengths and maintain the relationships and linkages that were begun in the context of the shelter--the "community within a community". Nevertheless, there is the recognition that ultimately, there cannot be independence without support. The shelter then, as an alternative model of service delivery, can lay the groundwork for a system of support, the final outcome of which is family independence.

A Service Model for Homeless Families


Where do
Families Come From . . .
STATE AGENCIES
LEGAL
HOUSING
COMMUNITY
MEDIA
EDUCATION
HEALTH SERVICE
ECONOMIC
ASSESSING
PLANNING
IMPLEMENTING
EVALUATING
FAMILY
SHELTER MANAGEMENT
COMMUNITY OUTREACH/EDUCATION
PEER SUPPORT
RELOCATION
CHILDREN'S SERVICES
HEALTH SERVICES
INDIVIDUAL & GROUP COUNSELING
ADVOCACY
CASE MANAGEMENT
FOLLOW-UP
Where do
Families Go . . .

Outer Circle:
State Agencies: DPW; DSS; DMH; Elder Affairs; OFC; DPH; EOCD; LHA
Legal: Legal Assistance; Police; Court System
Housing: Public; Private; Private/Non-Profit
Community: Day Care; Family Support Network; Civic Groups; Advocacy Groups; Religious Groups; Recreation; Local Resources/Facilities
Education: School Systems; Higher Education; Remedial Programs; Job Training
Health Service: Physical Health; Mental Health; WIC; Nutrition
Economic: Employment; Income Maintenance; Food Stamps; Fuel Assistance; Emergency Assistance

Section VIII

Homeless Children and Education

Center for Law and Education
Homelessness Information Exchange
National Coalition for the Homeless

CENTER for
LAW and EDUCATION, Inc. NEWSNOTES
Larsen Hall — 14 Appian Way Cambridge, Massachusetts 02138 (617) 495-4666
No. 38 **September, 1987**

Homelessness: A Barrier to Education for Thousands of Children

Homelessness, a societal crisis now claiming an increasing number of families and children as its victims, is inflicting special damage on homeless school-aged youths by barring or impeding these children's access to education.

Recently-gathered information from a number of sources indicates that the transient, uncertain existence of the homeless and the application of state or local school attendance and transportation policies to homeless students have combined to keep these children out of school, or to make their continued attendance an almost impossible task for families without permanent shelter. In an effort to address this problem, children's advocates have collected data about the existence and extent of barriers to educational access, worked for the passage of federal legislation to guarantee homeless students their educational rights, and, in New York, are beginning to litigate the question of whether residency laws and regulations can effectively keep homeless children out of the classroom.

Although the total number of homeless persons in America is often disputed (estimates range from 300,000 to three million), there is a growing body of data indicating that the number of families and children who live without permanent housing is increasing at an alarming rate. A 1987 study by the New York-based Partnership for the Homeless stated that homeless families now comprise the largest portion of the homeless population, and, based on data provided by forty cities, reported that children under the age of sixteen constituted between 18.2% and 19.8% of those cities' homeless. The results of a U.S. Conference of Mayors survey of twenty-nine cities reported that families represent approximately one-third of the homeless populations in those cities, and that the number of homeless families is expected to increase.

In addition, advocates are beginning to collect data dealing specifically with the impact of homelessness on education. The preliminary results of an eight-city survey by the Child Welfare League of America indicate that 43% of homeless school-aged children do not attend school. Seventeen cities responding to the U.S. Conference of Mayors survey reported that homeless children experienced problems relating to unstable school attendance and lack of access to education.

Continued on next page

Special Issue

The Educational Rights of Homeless Children

Photo by Marianne Gontarz

The articles in this issue were researched and written by Center for Law and Education Staff Attorney Shelley Jackson, with the assistance of Lucy R. Watkins, Education Advocate, and Paul Weckstein, Director of the Center's Washington, D.C. office.

New Federal Act Protects Education Rights of Homeless Children

Two years of legislative advocacy on behalf of the children of homeless families and homeless or runaway youth came to fruition in late June, when Congress enacted the "Stewart B. McKinney Homeless Assistance Act". This legislation, an omnibus package of several programs benefitting homeless persons, includes a provision designed to ensure that no homeless child is denied access to education. President Reagan signed the McKinney Act into law on July 22, 1987, and it is effective upon enactment.

The Act's education provision states Congressional policy that homeless children have access to a free, appropriate public education on an equal basis with non-homeless children, and that state residency laws not be used as a tool to bar homeless youngsters from school. The new law establishes a $12.5 million, two-year grant program to assist states and localities in implementing Congressional policy through study, planning and the provision of education to homeless children.

The McKinney Act guarantees all states a share of five million dollars annually in federal fiscal years 1987 (currently in progress, ending September 30, 1987) and 1988 (beginning October 1, 1988), distributed according to a formula that parallels state funding allocations under the Chapter 1 program. Each recipient state will be given at least $50,000 per fiscal year. Although states do not have to apply for these grants, the Act sets aside money for every state.

Continued on page 3

Homelessness

(continued from page 1)

The lack of access to school or difficulties in obtaining an education are among the myriad of problems that confront families struggling to survive on the streets, in shelters, in "welfare motels" and other temporary accommodations.

In February, 1987 the Center for Law and Education, the National Coalition for the Homeless, the Homelessness Exchange and the National Network of Runaway and Youth Services collaborated on a survey of approximately 110 shelter providers (including family shelters, soup kitchens and shelters for runaway youth) throughout the country. The results showed that one-third of these providers knew of denials of educational access to the homeless.

Shelter providers reported (1) cases in which residency laws were used to bar continued access to the schools or school districts where students had been enrolled before their homelessness required a temporary move out of the school attendance area, (2) cases in which residency laws were used to preclude initial access to schools or school districts serving the attendance area where a homeless student is temporarily housed and (3) cases in which schools used guardianship laws as a barrier, by refusing to consider a homeless child as a resident unless the child lived with a parent or legal guardian. These guardianship requirements can affect children who are separated temporarily from their family, and living with a friend or relative who is not a legal guardian, as well as homeless runaway youth.

In addition, approximately 23% of those responding to the survey of shelter providers knew of instances in which homeless students' educational access had been hampered by the inability to obtain prior school or health records. Nineteen percent reported the denial of special services, including special education, and 15% reported that inadequate or unavailable transportation had been a barrier to educational access.

Anecdotal information from published newspaper reports, and the first-hand experiences related by shelter providers, flesh out these statistics to paint a revealing picture of the hard life of a homeless student. Every day, these children confront abject poverty, poor nutrition, transiency and frequent absences in efforts to complete their homework, remain attentive in class and continue to advance in their studies. In some cases, the stress of homelessness and the need to meet other family needs relegates a child's education to low priority status. Homeless students often endure the ridicule of their peers, and are derided as "hotel kids". Dr. Ellen Bassuk, a psychiatry professor at the Harvard University Medical School, studied 156 Massachusetts homeless children, and found evidence of the damage inflicted by a life on the streets and in temporary accommodations. Many very young children in this study suffered from developmental delays, and, on the average, manifested more of some behavioral problems than young non-homeless children who had been diagnosed as "emotionally disturbed". School-aged children who completed Bassuk's psychological tests often scored above the recommended cut-off points for psychiatric referral and evaluation. Thus, homelessness itself may be creating a generation of children who have special educational needs, even as these youths' lack of permanent shelter bars them from the classroom and from receiving other services often offered to special needs students.

Photo by Jim Hubbard

No Action From The States

In contrast with the experiences and reports of shelter providers and others who have direct, daily contact with homeless families and children, state Department of Education officials appear largely uninformed about the presence of homeless children within their state, the extent of these children's educational needs and whether homeless youths receive an education at the local level. In March, 1987, the Center for Law and Education sent a questionnaire regarding state practices and policies for homeless students to the chief state school officers in the fifty states and the District of Columbia, and received twenty-three responses. The majority of the respondents, however, had no statewide data on the number of homeless children within their jurisdictions or whether those children were able to obtain an education. The majority of states had no uniform plan for ensuring that homeless students received an education.

Thirteen respondents either returned the questionnaire unanswered, claiming they had "insufficient data" to complete it, or reported that they did not compile the information it requested. Four state school officials indicated that other non-education state agencies might have the requested information, and forwarded the questionnaire to those agencies. Of these four, only the District of Columbia has subsequently responded.

Only eight respondents, from Alaska, the District of Columbia, Hawaii, Maryland, New York, North Carolina, South Carolina and Wyoming, provided any substantive information in response to the Center's survey. In almost all cases, however, these respondents did not answer every question. Six of these states reported that they have a homeless, school-aged population, but only two officials (from New York and D.C.) were able to estimate how many homeless children attended school in their jurisdictions. Only Hawaii reported that guidelines existed for determining where homeless children will be educated, but failed to elaborate. Only New York reported that state and/or local initiatives had been proposed to address the educational rights of homeless children.

The reports from state Department of Education officials and from shelter providers differed most sharply regarding the outright denial of or barriers to educational access. Only the New York Department of Education was aware of

Continued on next page

Homelessness

(continued from page 2)

the practice of school districts denying access to homeless children, perhaps in part because this issue has been litigated in that state. Similarly, only New York was aware of homeless children being denied access to various special educational programs (special education for the disabled or vocational education, for example). Only three respondents reported arrangements to provide and pay for transportation if a homeless child continues to attend school in a former district of residence, and four reported arrangements for transportation if the child goes to school in area in which the family's temporary accommodations are located. And, although shelter providers cited the inability to obtain records as the primary ancillary barrier to educational access for the homeless, not a single state Department of Education reported that a child's inability to obtain records prevent him or her from entering the classroom.

Local and National Advocacy

As documentation regarding the educational problems of the homeless piles up, these children's needs are also getting increased attention through legislative and litigation efforts. In late June, Congress enacted an omnibus homeless aid package, including a provision designed to provide educational access to all homeless children. (See "New Federal Act Protects Education Rights of Homeless Children," in this issue.)

To date, three cases, all in New York, have challenged the outright denial of educational access to homeless students. In each case, local school districts relied on their interpretation of New York residency standards to hold that the affected homeless plaintiffs were not "residents" of the school district and barred the students from school. In the absence of a state law or policy establishing a uniform approach to educating homeless children, the resolution of each of these disputes has been governed by a "case-by-case" determination standard set down by the New York Commissioner of Education. This litigation has produced mixed results; one family succeeded in forcing the family's prior district of residence to allow its homeless children to attend school there, but two subsequent plaintiffs, who also wanted their children to continue attending the schools in which they were enrolled prior to becoming homeless, were ordered to enroll the children in the school district in which the family's temporary shelter was located. (See "Advocates in New York Challenge Denial of Education to Homeless Children,' in this issue.)

In addition, at least two other non-education cases brought on behalf of homeless families discuss homelessness as a barrier to educational access. In *Massachusetts Coalition for the Homeless v. Dukakis*, an ongoing case, homeless plaintiffs charge that state welfare benefits are insufficient to allow recipients to obtain affordable housing in which to raise their families. Through affidavits, these plaintiffs voiced concerns about the impact of homelessness on their children's education. For example, one plaintiff stated that she and her two children had moved three times in four months within one city, and that, as a result, her daughter had changed schools three times. Another plaintiff reported her difficulties in transporting her five school-aged children, including two handicapped children, back to school in their former school district from temporary motel accommodations sixteen miles away. In *Hansen v. McMahon*, a case challenging the California Department of Social Service's refusal and inability to provide overnight shelter for homeless families, plaintiffs' affidavits detailed cases in which homeless children fell behind academically and missed long periods of school while their families sought shelter. One shelter operator submitted an affidavit in *Hansen*, stating that she knew of homeless children who had not attended school in two years. (This case was ultimately decided in favor of the plaintiffs.)

The Center for Law and Education continues to gather data on the educational needs of the homeless, and will disseminate information about legislative mandates and advocacy strategies that may assist homeless students. The Center will also participate in a panel on the needs of homeless clients at the upcoming December, 1987 National Legal Aid and Defender Association convention in Miami. Legal services attorneys and other advocates who wish to share or receive information on this issue should contact Shelley Jackson at the Center's Cambridge office.

New Federal Act

(continued from page 1)

Any state choosing to apply to the Department of Education (ED) for these funds must use its grant to (1) gather data on the nature and extent of the problems of homeless youngsters' access to and placement in schools, and (2) develop and implement "state plans", ensuring that all homeless children are educated. States can either create or designate a state office as "Coordinator of Education of Homeless Children and Youth", which will be charged with carrying out these functions. These coordinating offices must submit interim reports to ED on their data collection by December 31, 1987, and file final reports by December 31, 1988.

State plans for education of the homeless must contain a provision authorizing state or local education agencies, the parents or guardians of homeless children, homeless or runaway youth or social workers to make decisions about the educational placement of and provision of services to homeless children. These plans must also establish a mechanism to resolve disputes concerning homeless students' educational placement.

"Best Interest of the Child" is the Determining Factor

State plans must, "to the extent practicable," be designed so that the affected local educational agencies will comply with the Act's provision for equal educational access for the homeless. Localities in participating states must enroll children who become homeless in either the school district in which the child was originally enrolled or the school district in which the child is actually living, whichever is in the child's "best interest". This provision of guaranteed access affects both homeless children who are living with their parents in temporary housing, and children whose homeless parents have placed them temporarily with others. Thus, schools can neither insist that children living apart from their parents reside with a legal guardian in order to be enrolled in school, or refuse to admit these youngsters unless homeless parents surrender their legal parental rights.

Localities must also provide educa-

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ED Begins Plans for Implementation

The Department of Education (ED) has begun planning implementation strategies for the elementary and secondary education provisions of the McKinney Act. ED has assigned primary responsibility to Tom Faegen, in the Department's Office of Compensatory Education Programs. He can be contacted at 2043 FOB-6, 400 Maryland Avenue, S.W., Washington, D.C. 20202 (202)732-4682.

According to Faegen, ED will notify states immediately about the McKinney Act by sending copies of the education provisions, and notice of the availability of grant monies, to state department of education officials in the fifty states and the District of Columbia. Education grant funds for federal fiscal year 1987 have already been appropriated.

Deadlines for grant applications will be announced shortly. At this writing, ED had not decided whether it would promulgate regulations to implement the new law, or issue non-regulatory guidelines instead.

New Federal Act

(continued from page 3)

tional services, such as special education, compensatory education for the disadvantaged, programs for limited-English-proficient students, vocational education, programs for the gifted and talented, and school meals to homeless children on the same basis as these services are provided to non-homeless students. The joint statement of conferees accompanying the Act states that transportation is also one of the services to be provided to homeless students in a non-discriminatory manner. Local educational agencies must also maintain the records of homeless children so that they are available in a timely manner when these children move to a new school district.

In addition to the funds provided under the basic grant program, the Act sets aside $2.5 million in competitive demonstration grants for federal fiscal year 1988. States and localities wishing to establish "exemplary programs" for educating the homeless can apply to ED for these funds, provided that the applicant is located in a state which has submitted a state plan.

Congress retained a supervisory role regarding education for the homeless by requiring reports from ED on each state's interim and final data reports within forty-five days after these reports are due. ED must also monitor and review state and local compliance with the McKinney Act in accordance with the provisions of the General Education Provisions Act (GEPA). GEPA gives ED the authority to require states to submit a plan for monitoring and enforcing local compliance with federal education grant program requirements. In addition, GEPA provides for the submission of state and local grant applications to ED that include assurances of monitoring by states, the availability of necessary technical assistance to local agencies, and state and local consultation with persons affected by federally-funded programs. ED must also give Congress an overall report on activities under the Act at the end of each fiscal year. This report is intended to cover activities in all states, including states that do not participate in the program. The General Accounting Office must give Congress a nation-wide estimate on the number of homeless children by June 30, 1988.

Although any state accepting McKinney Act funds must comply with the Act's requirements, states do not have to participate in this grant program. Non-participating states need not abide by the specific planning and data collection mandates that accompany the receipt of grant monies, but advocates may be able to argue that these states are nevertheless bound by the general equal protection policies on which the Act is based. These policies, advocating equal educational access for the homeless and rejecting the use of residency laws as a bar to school enrollment, are included in the Act's general provisions, and are not tied to the receipt of grant monies.

Advocates Can Play A Role

Successful implementation of the McKinney Act depends primarily on participation of all states in the program, and the content and scope of each participating state's plan. To that end, homeless clients and their advocates may want to take an active role in determining how state and local education officials plan to implement the Act (see suggested questions in box), and in paying particular attention to certain issues, including decisions governing these youngsters' educational placement and the provision of transportation to them.

Continued on next page

Suggested Questions Regarding the Education Provisions of the McKinney Homeless Assistance Act

1. Will this state apply for a McKinney Act grant for the education of homeless children and youth?

2. What state office will be the designated "Coordinator of Education of Homeless Children and Youth"?

3. Will advocates for the homeless and homeless persons be involved in gathering data about the number, location, nature and extent of the problem of educating homeless youngsters?

4. What will be the process for developing the "state plan" to ensure all homeless school-aged children are educated? Will this process include: a) public hearings? b) consultation with or involvement of homeless persons and their advocates?

Under the state plan:

5. Who will determine the "best interest" of a homeless student? Will parents be deemed to know the child's "best interest"? If not, how will the parent's views be taken into account? In the case of homeless or runaway youths, will their views and those of shelter counselors be taken into account?

6. What will be the standard for the "best interest" of a homeless child? Will this standard give enough weight to:
   - the need to avoid disrupting the child's education?
   - problems parents and children may face if forced to commute long distances without having transportation provided by a local school district?
   - Parents' intent about future residence — to either return to the child's prior school district, or to remain in the school district in which the family is temporarily sheltered?

7. Will school placement decisions meet the overall legal mandate to avoid discriminatory treatment of homeless children? Will these decisions assure:
   - That families residing in shelters are not treated differently from other, non-homeless residents when they seek to enroll their children in the attendance area where they are sheltered?
   - That families intending to return to their prior district of residence, and wishing to continue enrollment in that prior district, are not treated differently from other, non-homeless families who travel temporarily outside the district?
   - That children of homeless families who have been temporarily placed with a friend or relative will not be barred from school on the condition that the homeless parents surrender their legal parental rights?
   - That homeless or runaway youth will not be barred from school because they are not living with a legal guardian?

8. What procedures will be used to resolve disputes over a homeless student's educational placement? Do these procedures provide for a full and impartial determination of the child's best interest (independent decision maker, adequate notice, right to representation, to present and cross examine witnesses and evidence, findings, and appeal)? Do these procedures assure that a child's education will not be disrupted during the pendency of any dispute?

9. Will transportation always be provided to the school that meets the child's best interest?

10. How will state and local officials ensure that homeless students receive equal access to special educational services?

11. How will state and local officials ensure that the school records of homeless children are available in a timely manner when these children move to a new school district?

12. Are state school residency requirements being reviewed and revised to ensure that they do not interfere with the provision of a free and appropriate public education in the school that meets a homeless student's best interest?

13. Will state or local education officials be encouraged to coordinate with agencies responsible for placing homeless families in order to avoid disruption of education?

14. How will state officials publicize the Act's provisions and the requirements included in state plans to local education agencies?

15. What provisions will be made for monitoring local compliance with the provisions of the McKinney Act? Do these monitoring and enforcement tools include:
   - Site visits?
   - Collection of local data and reports?
   - Review of educational placement decisions?
   - Consultation with homeless persons and their advocates?
   - Well publicized complaint procedures?
   - Strict and effective timelines and remedies for correcting deficiencies?
   - Technical assistance?

New Federal Act

(continued from page 4)

The law seeks to avoid instances in which a child who becomes homeless during the school year is effectively barred from attending school in either the child's district of origin or district of temporary residence, if each district asserts that the child fails to meet applicable residency requirements (see summary of the *Delgado* case in "Advocates in New York Challenge Denial of Education to Homeless Children," in this issue). In those states receiving grants, homeless children are to be enrolled in one of the two school districts, in accordance with the child's "best interest", rather than on the basis of administrative convenience or cost. States must authorize state or local education agencies, the parents of homeless children, homeless or runaway youth or social workers to determine this standard.

Advocates could seek to ensure that states, in adopting a substantive standard for the best interest of the child, address the primacy of the parents' role. This parental involvement is supported by the Act's explicit recognition that homeless parents may be authorized to make decisions about their children's education, and by the need to formally acknowledge the view of parents who object to placement decisions through the dispute resolution mechanism required in each state plan. Advocates can play a major role in developing impartial procedures for resolving disputes, and for assuring a process that is speedy and non-disruptive to the child's education.

In addition, conference committee language states that local educational agencies must provide transportation "at the same level and to the same degree as ... offered to other students in that particular school." Advocates should rely on this language to ensure that localities plan transportation routes that are accessible to homeless children. In addition, when a proper placement decision, serving the best interest of the child, is made, transportation must obviously be provided where needed.

Other programs within the McKinney Act's education and training provisions include a $17.5 million adult literacy initiative and a $14 million job training program. The entire Act includes assistance in the areas of housing, health care (including mental health), emergency food and shelter, community services and special programs for homeless veterans. The Act carries a total authorization of $443 million for fiscal year 1987 and an additional $616 million for fiscal year 1988. Congress recently appropriated $355 million for FY 1987.

The Center for Law and Education will monitor the implementation of the McKinney Act's education provisions. Advocates and clients with questions about the Act or those seeking copies of it, as well as those with future information about its execution in their state should contact Shelley Jackson at the Center's Cambridge office.

Advocates in New York Challenge Denial of Education to Homeless Children

New York, generally regarded as the state with the country's largest reported homeless population, has been the focus of the most formal legal advocacy on the denial of education to homeless children, and the source of the most comprehensive information from state and New York City education officials on the nature and scope of this problem.

Homeless clients and their advocates have challenged the use of New York residency requirements as a barrier to educational access three times, once before the state Department of Education and twice in state court. The first legal case to consider this issue, *Richards v. Board of Education of Union Free School District Number Four*[1], was brought to a New York Department of Education administrative hearing. The plaintiff in this case, Mary Richards, was a homeless woman with two teen-age children from Port Chester, New York. The Richards family lost its home in the spring of 1984 when the Westchester County Department of Social Services decided that the apartment in which they lived was too hazardous, and relocated them.

During the first five months of the 1984-85 school year, the Richards lived in six different motels in five different school districts. The plaintiff retained strong community ties to Port Chester, and searched diligently for permanent housing so that the family could return there. Despite these efforts, the doors of the Port Chester schools were closed to the Richards youngsters. School officials prevented the plaintiff's daughter from enrolling in high school, and dismissed the plaintiff's handicapped son from middle school after he had attended classes for approximately six weeks. Officials justified this exclusion by arguing that the Richards children no longer satisfied state residency requirements, even though the Superintendent of Schools was aware that the family was currently homeless, staying in various school districts for only a brief period of time, and that the plaintiff intended to return to Port Chester.

After efforts to negotiate with school officials failed, Richards, represented by attorney Jerrold Levy at Westchester Legal Services, requested that the New York State Commissioner of Education declare all homeless children in temporary accommodations to be residents of the school district where they last had permanent housing.

The *Richards* case turned on the Commissioner's interpretation of New York's school residency statute, which states only that a person between five and 21 years old is "entitled to attend the public schools maintained in his district of residence."[2] The Commissioner, relying on existing case law, found that "a residence is not lost until another residence is established through both intent and action expressing such intent."

In July, 1985, the Commissioner decided the *Richards* case in favor of the plaintiff, but denied the across-the-board relief she had sought for all homeless students. The decision in *Richards* held that the plaintiff and her children remained residents of the Port Chester school district, and reached this holding by relying on the plaintiff's numerous and various efforts to return there. These efforts included attempting to obtain a public housing subsidy in Port Chester, continuing ties with church and family members there, receiving mail at a post office box there, and virtually living in Port Chester, returning to the various motels in which the family was living only to sleep. "Petitioner has not expressed or implied any intention of abandoning her residence in the district or any intention of establishing a residence in another district", the Commissioner held. "Until such an intent is expressed or can be inferred from her actions, petitioner and her children have not lost their status as residents of the Port Chester-Rye Union Free School District."

Commissioner Ordered Case-By-Case Decisions

The Commissioner rejected plaintiff's request that the Department of Education issue a declaratory ruling that would affect all homeless children. Finding that "determinations of residency are mixed questions of law and fact which do not

Continued on next page

Advocates in New York

(continued from page 5)

lend themselves to general declarations", and arguing that policy determinations might not be served by requiring all homeless students to return to the district from whence they came, the Commissioner held that absent legislation, each conflict concerning the residency of a homeless child must be determined on a case-by-case basis.

This case-by-case approach set the stage for two subsequent court cases from Long Island, New York. *Delgado v. Freeport Public School District*[3] concerned a welfare recipient and her two sons, who had lived in the town of Freeport for twenty months before becoming homeless in December, 1985. The local social services agency placed the Delgado family in an emergency shelter for one month, and then in temporary housing in the Roosevelt School District.

Both the Roosevelt and the Freeport school districts refused to admit the Delgado children. Each district claimed its position was supported by state residency law, with Roosevelt arguing that the family had established no permanent residence within its jurisdiction, and Freeport asserting that the children had lost their residency status when they lost their home.

The plaintiff in this case preferred that her children attend the Freeport school district, but the *Delgado* court held the family's residence was Roosevelt, and that the children had to attend school there. Focusing on the fact that the children were currently in Roosevelt, the court dismissed the uncertainty surrounding the duration of their stay as "irrelevant". The court also found that the plaintiff failed to establish "significant or determinative ties" to Freeport. "What ties were shown amount merely to living there", *Delgado* held. "Such ties can be developed with ease wherever the family lives."

The third denial of education case, *Mason v. Board of Education, Freeport Union School District*[4], also involved the Freeport school district's application of residency requirements to homeless children. The Mason family, including a mother and five school-aged children, lived in Freeport for ten years before becoming homeless in October, 1986. In the seven months following their dislocation, the Masons moved eight times in five different school districts.

The Mason children were dismissed from the Freeport schools for lack of residency in November, 1986, and never returned to school during the 1986-87 academic year. Attorneys from the Nassau/Suffolk Law Services Committee (also counsel to the plaintiffs in *Delgado*) attempted to make a factual distinction between *Mason* and *Delgado*, by relying on the Mason family's long-standing ties to Freeport, the extremely temporary nature of shelter the family had received since becoming homeless, and the plaintiff's efforts to return to Freeport.

In April, 1987, a state court judge rejected these arguments, and ruled that the Mason children's "bodily presence" established their residence for school attendance purposes. At the time of the court's ruling, the Masons were living in Long Beach, New York, and the court held that the children were residents of that community, "notwithstanding the fact that such residence may not have been accompanied by an intention to dwell there permanently."

According to Edward Luban, the Nassau/Suffolk Law Services Committee attorney representing the Masons, this family ultimately found housing in late April, 1987, in Malverne, a Long Island town a few miles from Freeport. While the family searched for housing, the Mason children remained out of school. Luban reports that the plaintiff attempted to enroll her children in the Malverne schools after settling there, but her efforts were delayed while the children's school records were obtained and trans-

Continued on page 7

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Photo by Marc Young

Advocates in New York

(continued from page 6)

ferred. By the time these records arrived, Luban said, the Malverne school system said it was too late to enroll the Mason children in school, because the academic year was almost over.

Luban said that Nassau/Suffolk is considering an appeal in *Mason*, and cited both a "legal argument and an equitable argument" for challenging the court's ruling. "The legal argument is based on residency," Luban said. "The law says you don't lose residency in one place until you acquire it in another, and that didn't happen here. As for the equitable argument, I think you just have to look at what happened in this case."

The facts of and erratic results in each of these cases demonstrate the difficulties homeless students and their families face in continuing a child's education, and the wide range of possible decisions when school residency determinations are applied to these children on a "case-by-case" basis. If New York applies for and accepts homeless education funds under the new McKinney Homeless Assistance Act, such decisions would turn on the "best interest of the child" involved, rather than on interpretations of state residency law.

Homeless families and school-aged children in New York City won a court victory on an important related issue — the provision of or payment for school transportation — in the 1986 case of *McCain v. Koch.*[5] *McCain* upheld a lower court decision[6] ordering the New York City Department of Social Services (DSS) to provide adequate transportation allowances for homeless students. *McCain* ordered the city to pay the actual transportation costs incurred by children who, as a result of their homelessness, have a long commute between their school and a shelter, motel or other temporary housing. Local DSS officials must give these allowances to homeless schoolchildren until the Department of Education provides students with transportation passes to cover these costs, the court held. In addition, the *McCain* court ruled that the city must pay the transportation expenses of homeless parents who wish to accompany their children to school if the children are too young to make this commute alone.

Unlike most states, New York education officials do collect information regarding the numbers of homeless children within the state, and are beginning to devise strategies to ensure equal educational access for these students. In response to a March, 1987 survey conducted by the Center for Law and Education in cooperation with other advocacy groups, the New York State Education Department reported that 10,000 students (including 8,000 primary- and 2,000 secondary-aged youths) throughout the state are without permanent housing. Two New York State Education Department employees are charged with the responsibility for ensuring that homeless students enroll and remain in school.

NYC Ombudsman Appointed

Photo by Jim Hubbard

In late March, 1987, the New York City Department of Education, which has approximately 7,000 school-aged homeless youth within its jurisdiction, appointed its first "ombudsman" to provide educational services for children in temporary housing. That ombudsman reported that the City has established a "Central Hotel Project" to deal with the educational placement and attendance problems of these children. The city said that other efforts, including tracking and monitoring systems to assess school attendance and special education referrals (an estimated 8% to 10% of student hotel residents receive special education services), are also planned.

In response to the Center's survey, New York officials at the city and state levels suggested outreach to and support services for homeless parents as the most effective way to keep youngsters in school while they live in temporary shelters. A New York state official noted that legislation to address the problem of educational access for the homeless has been pending in New York for three years, and indicated that passage of such legislation would be "a good start." "But," she continued, "our schools resent these children. We must look not only at educational concerns but at the social and economic causes for homelessness and our lack of response to these root causes. We focus on refugee camps in Lebanon, yet we have a generation of children growing up in our own version of internment camps in New York State."

Center for Law and Education *NEWSNOTES*

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1. No. 11490, N.Y. Dept. of Education (1985).
2. *See* N.Y. Civ. Serv. Law §3202.
3. 499 N.Y.S.2d 606 (N.Y. Sup.Ct. 1986).
4. No. 2865/87 (N.Y. Sup.Ct. mem. op. April 22, 1987).
5. 117 A.D. 198 (N.Y. App. Div. 1986).
6. *Matter of Fulton v. Krauskopf*, 127 Misc.2d 20 (N.Y. Sup.Ct.1984).

AROUND THE CENTER

Discipline Manual Update A supplement on the topic of "Search and Seizure" has been prepared, to update Section IV.B. of *School Discipline and Student Rights: An Advocate's Manual.* It includes an analysis of the U.S. Supreme Court decision in *New Jersey v. T.L.O.*, and other significant cases in this area that have been decided since the publication of the manual in 1982. The supplement also provides an update on the applicability of the exclusionary rule to school discipline cases. Copies of the 14-page supplement are available free to legal services programs and attorneys who provide free legal representation to LSC-eligible clients. Other persons may order it for $2.50, including postage and handling. Other sections of the manual are in the process of being updated.

Training Materials Available Copies of materials which have been compiled for training events conducted by the Center for Law and Education are available for distribution on request. The training packets can serve as reference guides on legal claims in respective areas, or as models for the development of materials for local, statewide or regional education law training sessions. Write to the Center's Cambridge office for a list of training materials and ordering information.

New Staff Members Lucy R. Watkins has joined the staff of the Center's Washington, D.C. office, as an Education Advocate. Her extensive experience in the field of youth employment and training at the local, state, regional, and national levels includes a stint as the Executive Director of Jobs for Youth-Boston, Inc. She has held a variety of policy and program development and consultant positions with such agencies as the Southern Regional Council, the Ford Foundation, the Commission on the Future of the South, and the North Carolina Fund, the first statewide anti-poverty program in the country. Lucy is currently focusing her attention on the federal Chapter 1 compensatory education program, vocational education, and the educational rights of homeless children.

Bonnie Wyneken has been hired to work in the Center's Cambridge office as a secretary and publications assistant. She has previous experience as a legal secretary, and has run her own free lance typing and editing service as well as a jewelry business.

Litigation Staff attorney Bob Pressman recently participated as co-counsel in the 24-day trial in *Ayers v. Allain,* a case contending that segregation and discrimination continue in Mississippi's system of higher education. The private plaintiffs in *Ayers* are represented by North Mississippi Rural Legal Services, which requested the Center's assistance in the case.

In late June, staff attorney Kathy Boundy submitted an *amicus curiae* brief to the United States Supreme Court in *Honig v. Doe,* a case which addresses the disciplinary exclusion of disruptive handicapped students from school. Participating as *amici* were Advocates for Children of New York, Inc., Disability Law Center, Inc., Massachusetts Advocacy Center, and the San Francisco Lawyers' Committee for Urban Affairs. The case will be argued in October, 1987.

Training Lucy Watkins attended two regional meetings of the National Coalition of Title I Chapter 1 Parents which were held in March, 1987. At the Region 5 (Midwest Region) meeting in Chicago, Lucy gave a presentation on the reauthorization of Chaper 1, and amendments that relate to improving parent involvement, quality of programs, and other aspects of the program. She also conducted two workshops on those topics at the Region 1 (Northeast Region) meeting in Hartford, Connecticut.

Special Education Advocates A group of forty experienced special education advocates from the New England area gathered in Cambridge on June 19th at a day-long meeting sponsored by the Center for Law and Education and the Disability Law Center. The agenda included sessions on the statutory duties of state education agencies and issues of shared responsibility for educational services, as well as updates on developments in the areas of attorneys' fees, early childhood education, and discipline issues. This was the second meeting of this discussion group, which plans to meet periodically on a regular basis. Center staff attorney Kathy Boundy is available to consult with special education advocates in other regions of the country who would like to organize similar groups.

Board Meeting The next meeting of the Center's Board of Directors will be held on Saturday, September 19, 1987 at 9:00 a.m. at the Center's Cambridge office.

Law Fellow Elissa Stein, recipient of a Harvard Law School Student Funded Fellowhip, is spending ten weeks at the Center this summer, working to update the 1982 manual *School Discipline and Student Rights,* as well as on other research and writing projects. Elissa is entering the final year of a four-year joint degree program at Harvard's Law School and John F. Kennedy School of Government.

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Model Projects Spotlight:

Education for Homeless Children: Status of States' Responses to the McKinney Act

States must assure that homeless children and youth are afforded a free and appropriate public education on the same basis as non-homeless children, according to the Education for Homeless Children and Youth provisions of the Stewart B. McKinney Homeless Assistance Act. The law also requires states to revise their residency laws if they present barriers to school registration. These mandates are independent of the receipt of federal funds.

Additionally, $4.7 million was provided for states to research problems pertaining to the education of homeless children and develop a plan to ensure access. All of the states applied for funds and appointed a coordinator to carry out these responsibilities. Reports on their research results were due to the federal Department of Education in December.

To be eligible for a share of the $4.8 million available for FY 1988-89, states must submit a plan to address the educational needs of homeless children by April 30th. An additional $4.9 million is available for FY 1989-90 for continued implementation.

Advocacy Group Monitors States' Progress

According to the Center for Law and Education (CLE), a national advocacy center on the education problems of low-income students, few concrete outcomes of the states' data collection and review of residency laws are yet apparent. The substance of forthcoming plans will provide a fuller picture of states' compliance and the eventual impact of the law.

(continued on page 2)

In This Issue

Model Projects 2

Transitional family apartments

Comprehensive day care

Homeless training program

Funds and Resources 5

McKinney update

Technical Advisors 6

Interior Designers address homelessness

Bibliography 7

Congressional hearing on family and child homelessness

ASID homeless manual

Programming for the homeless

Resource book for housing and community development agencies

Health care needs of the homeless

Homewords is a bulletin of programs, research, funding and experts on homelessness and reflects a sampling of the materials available through the Homelessness Information Exchange. This quarterly is designed to equip providers, planners and advocates with practical information. Subscriptions: $10 per year.

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In a CLE survey of states last summer, many of the 33 respondents indicated that placement and other decisions are left to the discretion of the local school district unless a problem is brought to their attention. Only five indicated that they would have some type of guidelines or legal advisory in place by the end of 1988. The efforts of those states are described below.

Placement Issue Addressed in NY, MA, NJ

One of the key decisions facing the states is the appropriate placement for the child. The Act requires that the child be enrolled in the school district of either prior or current residence, whichever is in the child's best interest, and leaves it to the states to authorize an individual or agency to make that decision. As a practical matter, the states must also determine which school district is financially responsible.

New York's rule, effective July 1988, gives the parent or guardian the choice of school district and this district picks up the cost. The State Education Department has recommended changing the rule so that the school district of last attendance is required to pay. The rule does not address the costs of transportation; however, a separate state policy requires social service districts to pay these costs for homeless children whose families receive public assistance.

The Massachusetts Commissioner of Education has issued a memorandum to school districts, instructing them to follow a parental choice policy. The elected school pays for the child's education but is not required to provide transportation from outside the district. In addition, they have urged schools to be sensitive to barriers faced by homeless children, such as obtaining records from prior schools.

The New Jersey Department of Education has reminded schools that state law entitles children of temporary residents to enroll in the district of current residence. For homeless children, the State advises the former and current district to make a joint decision on placement, taking into account factors such as parental views and the continuity of education.

Legislation passed by the State Senate, however, would delegate the placement decision to the district of prior residence and require them to pay the costs of education and transportation. The State would assume fiscal responsibility if the former place of residence could not be determined or is outside the state.

California Interprets Residency Laws

California has issued a legal advisory to superintendents to assure that residency laws do not exclude homeless children from public schools. The advisory reviews State education laws and concludes that a permanent address is not required to establish residency for school purposes.

Residency may be verified by letters from a social service agency, hotel or motel receipts, a post office box number, or a parent's affidavit. The advisory also restates the federal emphasis on serving the interests of the child in placement decisions.

Barriers Removed in Maryland

Maryland has developed interim guidelines to address barriers to school registration, transfer, and withdrawal. School administrative personnel place homeless students after consulting with the parent/guardian and student.

In cases where a parent or guardian cannot be located, the school notifies the local social service agency and appoints a temporary adult advocate to make educational decisions. Homeless students may be registered without school and health records, in which case follow-up efforts are required to obtain appropriate documents. The schools are being asked to provide information about homeless students to the State three times a year.

For further information on the above initiatives, contact the Homelessness Information Exchange. For information on advocacy or legislation, contact Shelley Jackson, Center for Law and Education, Larsen Hall, 6th Floor, 14 Appian Way, Cambridge, MA 02138, 617/495-4666.

States are required to hold public hearings on their plans to meet the educational needs of homeless children. Many of these are taking place in January and February. For information on times and locations, contact your state department of education.

Safety Network
April 1989

SAFETY NETWORK

Dep't of Education Finds 220,000 School-Aged Children Without Homes

According to a report released by the U.S. Department of Education (DOE), there are 222,000 homeless school-aged children in the United States.

The DOE figure represents a compilation of data from chief state school officers from all 50 states. Under the Stewart B. McKinney Homeless Assistance Act, states were required to calculate the number of school-aged children as part of the development of a plan to eliminate obstacles to education for these children.

Advocates believe the 222,000 figure to underestimate the number of homeless school-aged children. The National Coalition for the Homeless estimates that between 500,000 and 800,000 children are homeless in the United States.

Despite this, however, the figure by any measure represents an admission by federal and state education officials that the problem of child homelessness is of alarming proportions.

Furthermore, it indicates that states are beginning to take a long, hard look at the specific problems faced by homeless children in the educational system. In a March, 1987, survey by the National Coalition for the Homeless and other advocacy groups, only two states were able to provide estimates of the number of homeless school-aged children in the school system.

In calculating the number of homeless school-aged children, states used different techniques with varying degrees of success. Some states did a "snapshot," one-night survey of shelters; others sent out detailed questionnaires to schools and shelters for information.

Many Children Not Attending School

What is probably even more compelling than the total figure, however, is the DOE's finding that almost a third of homeless children are not attending school regularly.

In a December, 1987, report entitled *Broken Lives: Denial of Education to Homeless Children*, the National Coalition for the Homeless found in a survey of 105 shelter providers that 30% of homeless children were denied access to education.

Reasons for denial include restrictive residency or school records requirements, lack of adequate transportation, guardianship rules, and delays in health record transfers.

In their research on the obstacles to education, state departments of education found that these obstacles do serve to deny homeless children equal access to education. Other reasons for non-attendance include: discouragement as a result of frequent school changes and absences; lack of financial resources for clothes and school supplies; short shelter stays that make school enrollment a waste of time; lack of day care services for school-age parents; and a lack of primary health care services.

Special Services Needed

In their reports to the DOE, states recognized the need for special services—both educational and social—for homeless school-aged children and youth. Such services include preschool enrichment, remediation and/or tutoring in basic skills, early identification and enrollment of kindergarten students, extensive long-term counseling, educational assessment, screening and placement, support services such as counselors and social workers, a private place to study and do homework after school, education program continuity, and afterschool and extended day programs for recreation and tutorial services.

States also reported that school personnel need to demonstrate more sensitivity to and awareness of the problems of homeless children.

Need for Special Programs

While the numbers reported by the DOE are encouraging in their thoroughness, they are only numbers. Special programs are needed if the needs of homeless children are to be addressed.

The McKinney Act requires that states develop plans—due April 30, 1989—to address the denial of education to these children. Advocates hope that these plans will contain more than just removal of obstacles, and include constructive, compensatory programs which will help children stay in school. The National Coalition for the Homeless continues to monitor these plans and their implementation.

Homeless Children Denied Access to Education, Lawsuit Charges

The Department of Education is violating a congressional mandate to ensure access to education for homeless children, charged the National Coalition, several homeless children, and an emergency shelter in a recent lawsuit.

The lawsuit, filed December 28, 1987, demands that Secretary of Education Bennett and the Department of Education accelerate the application process for state education funds for homeless children.

McKinney Act Violated

Under the Stewart B. McKinney Homeless Assistance Act, enacted July 22, 1987, Congress stated that "each State educational agency shall assure that each child...have access to a free, appropriate public education."

To implement this mandate, the McKinney Act made available $5 million in funding, to be distributed to states. States then establish an Office of Coordinator that will gather data on homeless children and formulate a state plan addressing the specific barriers to the education of homeless children. According to the court papers filed in the case, the DOE should have implemented the program this past fall, in time for the new school year.

However, the Department of Education issued applications to state departments of education only on December 7, 1987 and set the deadline for applications as April 30, 1988. While states may apply before that date, they are not required to do so—and in any case they cannot receive the full amount of their allocation until after April 30.

Plaintiffs charge that by the time new programs and policies to help homeless children are designed, a whole school year will have passed since the McKinney Act was passed, in violation of clear Congressional intent.

The law firm of Covington & Burling is providing pro bono assistance in the lawsuit.

New Report: Homeless Children Denied Education

In a related development, a new National Coalition report, "Broken Lives: Denial of Education to Homeless Children," also filed in court, has found that scores of homeless children are routinely denied access to education. Thirty-four percent of shelter providers around the country reported denial of access on some ground to children in their shelters, according to data gathered in a Spring 1987 survey by the National Coalition, the Center for Law and Education, and the National Network of Runaway and Youth Services.

Most commonly, according to the report, children experience denial because of restrictive residency requirements, under which a homeless child may be denied "residency" in both his shelter area and his former home area, and thus not be entitled to attend school in either school district.

In addition, strict documentation requirements—for medical records and school transcripts—frequently delay or prohibit school registration. Lack of adequate transportation to a school in another district makes attendance virtually impossible. And often homeless children with special education needs do not have access to needed programs because of lengthy and complicated evaluation procedures.

According to Lydia Ely, who compiled the report, "the importance of education as a stabilizing factor in the lives of homeless children cannot be overstated." The report emphasizes the need for state participation in the new McKinney program.

Safety Network
January 1988

Section IX

Examples of Family Programs

ConServe (The Consortium for Services to Homeless Families)

ConServe places homeless families in permanent housing and offers stabilization services through a consortium of community agencies for up to one year after the family is rehoused. The Washington, DC, program provides housing counseling, rent subsidies, and case management at about one-fourth the cost of the City's emergency services.

The first goal of ConServe is to move homeless families from temporary shelter to more cost-effective and appropriate housing. Secondly, the program helps families to move toward self-sufficiency through the services of its ten member agencies and other providers. The consortium members, nonprofit and social ministry groups, provide temporary housing, child care, legal aid, health care, support groups, money management, job counseling, literacy training, food, and transportation.

Families are referred to the program from the City Department of Social Services. Initially, ConServe conducts an assessment to identify the family's needs and required services. Through a mutual contract called the Family Stabilization Plan, the family agrees to work toward goals which help them to live independently; ConServe agrees to seek housing, access services the family needs, and mediate tenant-landlord disputes.

The housing relocation and subsidy program is a critical aspect of the program. The housing counselor or family finds a private market unit and ConServe subsidizes rent in excess of 30 percent of the family income, similar to the federal Section 8 program. The program's success in finding housing for families is largely due to outreach to landlords and advocacy on behalf of families. The goals and time frames for each family are jointly established and evaluated. To continue to receive the rent subsidy and consortium services, families must progress toward their goals.

Since February 1987, ConServe has placed 80 families in permanent housing. Program data show that 16 percent of families are working when they enter the program whereas a year later, 56 percent are working and 14 percent are in training.

ConServe's success in coordinating resources has proven to be extremely cost-effective. In comparison to the City's monthly expenditure of between $2,700 and $3,300 per family for emergency services, ConServe provides permanent housing and case management services for $780 per family per month.

Rental subsidies represent about 40 percent of the $300,000 annual budget, which is supported by the DC Department of Human Services, foundation grants, and individual contributions.

Contact: Tony Russo, ConServe, 1711 14th St., N.W., Washington, DC 20009, 202/232-3355.

Interim Housing--Seattle Emergency Housing Service

Seattle Emergency Housing Service (SEHS) was established in 1972 to provide emergency shelter to families with children. Since its beginning with four donated apartments and a volunteer staff, SEHS has grown into the largest family shelter in the state of Washington. The primary mission of the agency continues to be providing emergency housing for families who are homeless due to unemployment, fire, domestic violence, eviction or family crisis.

SEHS also operates housing resource programs to enable homeless families in emergency shelter to resolve crisis situations and resume a self-sufficient status in the community. One of these programs, Interim Housing, offers transitional housing for one to four months to families leaving the emergency housing facility. The program is designed to give families time to find affordable housing or wait for public housing to become available.

A total of 16 single-family apartment units are currently utilized by the Interim Program. In 1983, SEHS purchased a duplex as a permanent site for Interim Housing; six units are leased from the Seattle Housing Authority; church groups provide two houses; and construction of a four-plex was completed in November of 1987.

Interim Housing provides 46 beds per night to both single- and two-parent families. Each family is counseled weekly in the areas of employment, public benefits, finances, and housing. Through the Health Care for the Homeless program, medical and mental health services are provided by a full-time nurse and a half-time mental health worker. In March 1988, SEHS and the Downtown YWCA opened the Homeless Families Support Center to provide day care to children in the shelters, parenting education groups, and therapy and referral for families in distress.

The average length of stay for each family is 122 days. Sixty-two percent of the families have dependent children, and 33 percent of the families are headed by a single parent. The average family size is slightly over four members.

Interim Housing requires that families have some source of income and show indication of financial responsibility and motivation. Families partially support the program by paying program service fees of $100 to $150 per month to cover utilities and maintenance.

Since 1980 the program has been supported by several funding sources including United Way, individual churches, the City of Seattle, the Boeing Employees Good Neighbor Fund, the Weyerhaeuser Foundation, and the Seattle Housing Resources Group.

For further information, contact Martha Dilts, Seattle Emergency Housing Service, 905 Spruce St., Seattle, WA 98104, 206/461-3660.

St. Paul YWCA

The St. Paul YWCA has established a four-stage program for homeless single women and women with children, which focuses on personal and career development and achievement of self-sufficiency.

The main YWCA building was developed as a mixed residential and commercial use property in the mid-1960s. In 1982, the three-floor residential area was converted to an emergency shelter with 24 single-room-occupancy (SRO) units for single women and 66 beds for women and their children. Fourteen of the SROs provide transitional housing at rents of $200 per unit. The YWCA also leases a 20-unit apartment building from a local bank which purchased and rehabilitated the building for their use. The building provides transitional housing for women with children at costs to the tenants of $225 and $305 per month for one and two bedroom units, respectively.

The service delivery system of the YWCA program addresses the needs of its clients in four stages. The first stage focuses on immediate security and health needs. Emergency shelter is provided for up to 30 days, at which time a woman has the option of moving into the transitional program or finding another place to live. At Stage 2, the individual or family identifies their future plans and enters into an agreement to work on specified goals. The services needed to achieve their goals (e.g., job training and education) can usually be found within the community. The YWCA develops an appropriate program if one is not available.

Stage 3 clients have moved into transitional housing and are attending school or working full-time. At Stage 4 most are employed full-time and have moved into permanent housing. Full-time employment is considered to be 40 hours per week with full benefits and a minimum salary of $6.50 per hour. Clients continue to work toward their goals throughout their involvement in the program and are allowed to access the services of the program for up to one year after leaving.

The programs operate with a minimum of on-site services because St. Paul has a wide variety of social services available. Staff help women to define goals, work on remedial skills, and identify appropriate agencies for obtaining services. They play a strong advocacy role, especially in assessing the woman's readiness for a particular program and selecting one which she is likely to successfully complete. Women are encouraged to pursue professional interests. Career choices have included areas such as banking , transportation, health care, veterinary science, and computers.

Programs are supported through the Community Development Block Grant Program, the Minneapolis-St. Paul Family Housing Fund, bank financing, and other public and private sources.

For further information, contact Ellen Hart, St. Paul YWCA, 65 E. Kellogg Blvd., St. Paul, MN 55101, 612/222-3741.

Our House: Comprehensive Day Care for Homeless Children

Our House is a specialized day care center for 30 homeless preschool children and offers parents a wide range of services and referrals. Unlike most day care centers, Our House attends to childrens' medical, nutritional and psychological needs. Operating since April 1988, the program is free of charge to families residing in the four family shelters in DeKalb County.

The project was conceived by members of the North Decatur Presbyterian Church who then sought the involvement of local ministries, shelter providers, county government, and other community groups. In 1987 they formed the DeKalb County Children's Shelter Development Committee to design the program, develop a budget, fundraise, secure a facility, and hire an interim coordinator until the project was funded.

Our House established an agreement with Columbia Presbyterian Church to lease their activity building for $1 per year for 15 years. Renovations of $60,000 were financed by HUD Supplemental Assistance for Facilities to Assist the Homeless (SAFAH) funds, county Emergency Shelter Grants, and private contributions. Staff salaries were paid by SAFAH in the first year but are now being raised through churches, foundations and private sources.

The program offers a safe, nurturing environment for children while their parents work or seek employment and housing. Planned activities are designed to improve child-parent relationships and foster learning; no formal curriculum is provided.

Services for children, guaranteed for up to 90 days, include comprehensive health care, counseling and nutritional guidance. Health screening and follow-up care are provided on-site by county public health nurses and the Atlanta Community Health Project for the Homeless, a private hospital project supported by McKinney funding. Children may also receive mental health services through referrals to a local counseling service.

The total operating budget for the project is $175,000. Four full-time and five part-time staff work with the children and are trained in social work, child development, education, and day care. One full-time coordinator directs the Family Resource Program for parents offering job training, health services, and assistance in obtaining jobs, housing and public benefits. Services of Our House have also prevented the loss of children to Protective Services for several families.

In its first nine months of operation, Our House offered day care to 275 children from 134 families. Forty-one families have moved into permanent housing and 83 parents have secured jobs.

For further information, contact Anne Branscome, Our House, Inc., 711 Columbia Dr., Decatur, GA 30030, 404/378-1060.

Ark Interfaith Family Shelter

The Ark Interfaith Family Shelter, a nonprofit organization incorporated in 1983, is an emergency shelter for homeless families in Oklahoma City. Individuals and churches worked together to establish the Ark in response to the growing number of homeless families in the area. Two local Episcopal churches allocated the initial funding of $25,000.

Two rehabilitated buildings leased from the county government provide 75 beds per night to couples and families on a first-come, first-served basis. Eight full-time staff members serve 102 families per year.

The program offers individual and family counseling, drug and alcohol addiction counseling, assistance with job searches, goal setting, and daily living skills. Community volunteers teach adult education classes and assist with building maintenance, clerical work, and transportation.

Families are admitted to the Ark for an initial stay of not more than one week, though extensions of up to 60 days may be granted, provided they meet with a counselor weekly to assess their progress on the personal goals established upon admission. Residents are expected to actively seek employment and/or permanent housing. In addition, they sign an agreement to help with housekeeping, meal preparation, and clean-up. Children are required to attend school.

In 1987, the Ark conducted a follow-up study of families served by the program to assess their status and the effectiveness of the program. They concluded that families often need more time to stabilize before entering permanent housing. Families are now encouraged to stay an additional month once they have secured employment.

The major funding sources are individuals, corporations, governments, and churches. Federal and state grants make up 20 percent of the budget.

Contact: Mary Steele, Ark Interfaith Family Shelter, P.O. Box 30036, Oklahoma City, OK 73140, 405/427-6073.

Salvation Army, St. Louis

A five-stage housing model, developed by the Salvation Army and the Community Development Agency of St. Louis in 1981, is the basis of a continuum of services for homeless families. This continuum assists families in achieving self-sufficiency by offering a combination of counseling, training, housing relocation, and support for self-help initiatives. Several cities and states have used this continuum as a model for service delivery to homeless families.

The five stages of the continuum are: *prevention,* which focuses on various types of financial assistance and counseling that may prevent future homelessness; *crisis,* in which shelter is provided for homeless families and a service plan is developed; *stabilization,* which focuses on support services and transitional housing; *relocation,* in which families are placed into permanent housing or assisted in returning to their homes; and *follow-up,* in which families are re-integrated into the community.

In this continuum, the Transitional Housing Project and the follow-up services are especially noteworthy. The Transitional Project houses ten families at a time, many of whom are single women with children. The units are part of a public housing complex and were redeveloped by the St. Louis County Housing Authority with funding from the Department of Human Resources.

The Housing Authority is responsible for maintenance, rent collection, and other management duties. A Salvation Army social worker serves as case manager for the residents and monitors progress toward securing appropriate permanent housing. The program offers employment services and weekly group meetings to teach parenting and coping skills and to assist families in developing mutual support. Families participate in the Transitional Project for up to six months and pay rent throughout their stay. Rent is often subsidized, as in public housing, but clients are responsible for their utilities.

Follow-up services are provided once a family has moved into permanent housing. A caseworker meets with the family monthly for the first three months and at the end of their first year to assess their stability and need for further services. Follow-up services usually involve supportive counseling and assistance in obtaining rent subsidies but may also include food, transportation, employment counseling, medical care, and furnishings.

Forty-eight percent of all families served and 75 percent of those in the Transitional Housing Project have moved into permanent housing.

Contact: Michael Klein, Salvation Army, Midland Division, 3800 Lindell Blvd., St. Louis, MO 63108, 314/533-6861.

Section X

A Collection of Articles on Homeless Families

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NEWSLETTER

ACNJ

ASSOCIATION FOR CHILDREN OF NEW JERSEY 17 ACADEMY ST., SUITE 709 NEWARK, NJ 07102 201/643-3876

Homeless in the Garden State

By Tricia Fagan
ACNJ Staff Associate

There is a growing epidemic among children in New Jersey. Though usually not fatal, it often scars people for life. Children of all ages are affected, but the younger a child is, the more likely it is that she or he will be a victim. This epidemic has spread across all racial and most economic classes, although children who are black, hispanic or less affluent are disproportionately affected. As a nation we often associate this problem with the 1930's, but the fact is that this is a serious problem of the 1980's. The epidemic is homelessness.

The number of homeless and near-homeless children and families throughout New Jersey grows larger every year. Though specific data is difficult to obtain, some estimates indicate that more than 60% of the "new homeless" in New Jersey are families with children. These families are already familiar to many private and public service agencies across the state. Last year, for example, 86% of the households served by New Jersey's new Homelessness Prevention Program were families with children. Unfortunately, however, most homeless families in New Jersey do not seem to be visible enough to demand the help that they need.

Homeless families in this state are not as easily identifiable as the individuals who are traditionally associated with homelessness. Though destitute individuals will sometimes sleep in entrance-ways, parks and other public places, most homeless parents instead choose to shelter their children in whatever way possible. Abandoned buildings, cars and vans or space in one of the few family shelters in the state shelter homeless families away from the public eye. Other families illegally double and triple up in the apartments of friends and family members who could face eviction if they are discovered. More than 117,000 eviction cases were filed in New Jersey between July 1984 and May 1985.

Poverty and Homeless Families

Who are homeless families, and why don't they have a place to live in a state which has the third highest per capita income in the country? Many of them are poor. Families in New Jersey who have children under eighteen years old are four times more likely to be living in poverty than other families.[1] The cost of housing has increased dramatically in the past twenty years. At the same time there has been an increased demand for housing in the state. Many lower income families struggling to make ends meet are simply unable to locate affordable, decent places to live. According to conventional standards, more than 3 out of 4 of New Jersey's lower income households pay more than they can afford for housing. A 1984 survey conducted by ACNJ and the Newark Pre-School Council found that Newark Headstart families spent 39% of their total income on housing, for example. Those families who rented on the free market (as opposed to those who lived in subsidized housing or who depended on alternate housing subsidy programs, such as Section 8) paid an average of 45% of their total income on housing.[2]

For those families who must depend on the current AFDC grant for income, the situation is almost impossible. As Table 1 demonstrates, based on fair market rents established by the federal government, a mother depending on AFDC would have to pay a *minimum* of 99% of her grant for decent housing in the least expensive county in the state. The U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development (HUD) bases these rents on actual costs of renting the most *minimally* decent housing within a given metropolitan statistical area. Fair rent costs vary from county to county from a high of $468 in Bergen and Passaic for a family of two to a low of $325 for that same family in Sussex.

Discrimination Against Children

Many homeless families have been discriminated against because they have children. With the state's critically tight rental market[3], landlords have become much more discriminating in their selection of tenants, despite the fact that this type of discrimination in renting is illegal. One-parent, low-income, non-white and younger families are most likely to be affected by discrimination by landlords because they represent the largest portion of families who rent. Surveys show, however, that white and more affluent families with children are equally discriminated against due to their parental status when they attempt to rent housing.[4]

New Jersey currently has a statute prohibiting discrimination against families with children under fourteen in rental housing (N.J.S.A. 2A:42-101). This law does little, however, to prevent real discrimination against families. A landlord is fined only $200 for a first violation and a maximum of $500 for any additional violations. The victim does not receive any of this fine, must pay her or his own court fees, and has no guarantee of housing even when they win their suit. Bill S-181, re-introduced by Senator Leanna Brown (R-Morris), would prohibit all forms of discrimination in

(continued on page 2)

Homeless

(continued from page 1)

housing against families with children under 18.'

The inequity of the housing market for parents is often compounded when a family faces racial or economic discrimination as well. While locating affordable housing for parents is difficult enough, the addition of these factors can make it almost impossible to find a place to live, even for families with a reasonable income.

Richard and Martha L., a young black couple who are life-long residents of Middlesex County, brought their two young children back to the county when Richard completed his tour of duty and left the Service in November, 1984. They stayed at a relative's home "temporarily" while looking for an apartment. Richard had a good job and hoped to find a nice home for $500-$550 a month. After 10 months of constant searching, the L. family was still unable to find housing. During that period the family came close to breaking up under the tremendous stress of losing out on advertised apartments, living day to day on the floors of family members' homes, and dealing daily with the frustrations of being homeless.*

The L's finally approached a fair housing advocate, convinced that they were being discriminated against. The agency worked with them in testing the availability of advertised rental units. They were able to prove that the L's were being clearly discriminated against. It wasn't until November, 1985, however, that the L. family finally found permanent housing.

Large Families Homeless

A small but significant number of families are homeless simply because they are unable to locate an affordable home large enough to accommodate their families. Multi-bedroom housing units available for families to rent in New Jersey today are practically nonexistent. Units of this type that were formerly available have been remodeled into smaller units, renovated into condominiums, turned into student housing, allowed to deteriorate. The result is that larger families who must rent have literally nowhere to go. Most of these families have three or four children. Some families, however, are even larger.

Alison R. lives in central New Jersey where she is raising eight children. For the past several years she has rented a house for $550 a month, borrowing wherever she can to make up the difference in her $528 a month AFDC grant. The landlord, hoping to force the R. family out, has allowed the house to deteriorate into substandard conditions. Alison, being unable to locate alternate housing for her family, has had to remain despite poor living conditions. The landlord recently increased the rent to $618. It is impossible for Alison to raise that amount each month. Inevitably, she and her children will be evicted. Though she has been trying for several years to get into the federal Section 8 housing program, she has been denied due to the intense competition for the limited number of Section 8 vouchers. Within a couple of months, Alison R. and her children will be homeless.

A suit filed by Ocean-Monmouth Legal Services in Ocean County in May, 1985 on behalf of seven families, each with three or more children, is currently awaiting a hearing date. The suit, *Algor vs. County of Ocean*, tests the constitutional right to shelter of homeless families in New Jersey and asks the court to establish the responsibility of the state, county municipalities and Board of Social Services involved in providing shelter to those families. It also raises questions about the right of families to stay together whether or not they are poor. The court's final decision on this case will have important repercussions for New Jersey's homeless families.

Families Separated

Many of the state's homeless families have children in foster care. The inability of a family to afford/provide housing for their children can be interpreted by the state as neglect. Though some emergency assistance funds exist to help families in housing and other emergencies, housing continues to be

(continued on page 3)

ACNJ offered the following recommendations in testimony to New Jersey's Council on Affordable Housing on February 13, 1986.

In establishing present and prospective need formulas, developing criteria for municipal fair share, and evaluating the final plans, it is essential that this Council maintain a focus on the tremendous need for affordable family housing in this state.

For various reasons senior citizen and young adult housing is often more attractive to municipalities than housing for families with children. In addition, developers may choose to build only single bedroom units as the most simple method of meeting their low/moderate income obligations. A responsible number of multi-bedroom units must be included in Fair Housing plans in order to meet the needs of N.J. families and thereby ensure the health of the state.

The Council must ensure that non-urban municipalities do not misuse the regional contribution agreements by transferring most or all of their low/moderate income *family* obligations to urban municipalities.

The pressing need for affordable housing for families is not only an urban phenomena. While innovative, measured use of the regional contribution agreements could prove beneficial to families and municipalities alike, we urge the Council to carefully scrutinize all these agreements to ensure that those municipalities asking to transfer some of their obligation have adequately planned for the need of their *own* lower and moderate income families. Employment and educational opportunities are vital to the success of young families. Further segregation of needy families must not be allowed to occur in this state. It's bad policy for families and bad policy for New Jersey's own continued growth.

There is a need to ensure that a minimum reasonable percentage of the low/moderate income housing to be developed is rental housing.

For a large portion of the lower income population, including many of the state's single parents with children, homeownership is currently an unrealistic goal. Yet thousands of previously available, affordable rental units have been lost in the past decade alone due to gentrification, development of condominium and co-op units, and deterioration. It is essential that rental units be part of any municipality's fair share plan.

We urge the Council to consider adding at least one additional public member.

This body is charged with an extremely important public responsibility, one which will have far-reaching significance for New Jersey and its citizens. Because of this we would like to see at least one other public member on this Council to represent the needs of the moderate and, perhaps more importantly at this time, low income citizens of the state.

Finally, we believe that the Council must not only set specific numbers for each municipality's fair share, but must also institute mechanisms to ensure that municipalities actually follow through on their plans in a responsible and timely manner.

Along the same line, the success of this most important endeavor will depend on meticulous monitoring of all phases of planning and actual implementation (including follow-through on any regional contribution agreements) to ensure that municipal plans are being carried out as stipulated. These issues are too important to leave to "good faith" arrangements. There must also be mechanisms established that guarantee reasonable, equitable resale and rental controls for Mt. Laurel housing.

Homeless

(continued from page 2)

a primary cause of out-of-home placement in this state. A 1985 report for the Division of Youth and Family Services (DYFS) noted that homelessness and extreme housing difficulties represent the problems most frequently encountered by families whose children are placed in foster care in New Jersey (40% of families with children in placement).[7] The State's Child Placement Review Advisory Council has also documented this correlation between lack of housing and out-of-home placement. Housing is the number one reason for children being removed from their parents, representing 19% of all CPR cases in 1984.[8]

Pat T. admits that after struggling to find housing for herself and her 5 children while camping on the floors of different friends and relatives, temporarily placing her children in foster care was almost a relief. The T. family was evicted from their urban apartment when they were unable to pay the rent increase demanded. Pat T., a white lower-income homemaker who was abandoned by her husband, hoped that she would be able to find a decent apartment quickly and bring the family back together. Several months later she is in even worse condition than before. Her children, though placed voluntarily, will not be returned to her until she finds appropriate housing according to state standards. Pat T., however, is no longer eligible to receive any AFDC or related assistance the family was formerly receiving as long as her children aren't living with her. Without that aid and faced with the limited housing options available, Pat T. is fearful she may never get her family back.

There are many parents like Pat T. throughout the state. They are faced with an almost impossible task of locating and securing housing for their family with little if any income. If not, they face losing their children permanently. Even if a parent can locate an apartment and find assistance in putting up the security deposit, she* must convince the landlord of her ability to pay the rent. DYFS and the Division of Welfare have an agreement whereby Welfare will begin processing an AFDC grant for the full amount if DYFS notifies them as to the exact day that the children are to be returned home. With this arrangement a parent should receive her full AFDC grant the day the children come home. Checks are not always available on time, however, and few landlords will rent on only the promise of a constant income. Some states, such as Massachusetts, extend AFDC assistance for several additional months to parents whose children have been temporarily placed for reasons such as housing, in order to help stabilize the family's situation. New Jersey has yet to develop a similar approach to this problem of families being separated, sometimes permanently, simply because they can't find decent, affordable housing. In the end, the state ends up paying to maintain these children, usually in separate foster homes, for months and sometimes years, while the mother searches for decent, affordable housing.

TABLE I.

Family Size	Parent 1 Child	Parent 2 Children	Parent 3 Children
Maximum AFDC Grant (per month)	$292.00	$385.00	$443.00
N.J. Average Fair Rent Cost (per month)	$394.90	$462.70	$575.10
% of Grant	(135%)	(120%)	(130%)
Fair Rent in Least Expensive County [Sussex] (per month)	$325.00	$380.00	$475.00
% of Grant	(111%)	(99%)	(107%)
Fair Rent in Most Expensive County [Bergen & Passaic] (per month)	$468.00	$543.00	$677.00
% of Grant	(160%)	(141%)	(153%)

One-Parent Families

Probably the largest and most rapidly growing number of homeless families are those headed by one parent, usually the mother. Among all the homeless families already mentioned — those who are poor, those facing discrimination, those with many children, and those who have children in foster care — the vast majority are headed by a single mother.

Between 1970 and 1980 the number of one-parent families in New Jersey increased by 250%. Today, close to 20% of the state's children live with their mothers. The major growth in the one-parent family during this period of time is a result of increases in divorce rates and numbers of parents who have never married. A report by the N.J. Department of Community Affairs[9] illustrates that one-parent families, particularly those headed by women, are especially affected by the current housing crisis. They are usually substantially poorer than two parent households, are more likely to face discrimination by landlords and credit establishments, and have more special needs in housing due to their status as sole support and parent figure in their family.

Some of these homeless single parents are women in domestic violence shelters, some are unwed teenage mothers, some are divorced suburban mothers desperate to remain near their jobs and communities. The Middlesex County Housing Coalition's survey demonstrates that one-parent families experiencing severe housing difficulties come from every socio-economic class and from suburban, rural and urban municipalities throughout the entire state. Clearly, homelessness is a problem affecting children and families in every county, and it is a problem that's growing.

ADDRESSING THE CRISIS

In the face of this crisis, what is being done for the many families and children who are already homeless? And what is being done in New Jersey to *prevent* families and children from becoming homeless in the face of the critically shrinking affordable housing market?

Federal Response: An Abdication of Responsibility

For almost 50 years, with the adoption of the Federal Housing Act of 1937, the Federal government assumed fundamental responsibility for providing, in conjunction with state and local authorities, "...decent, safe and sanitary dwellings..." for the nation's lower income families. Since 1981, however, despite the growing number of Americans living in poverty and the escalating costs of housing[10], the Federal government has chosen to cut back (almost to the point of elimination) its funding for any type of subsidized housing. Review of the proposed federal budget for FY'87 shows that the Administration plans to continue this trend by freezing and/or totally eliminating whatever Federal programs still exist to assist people in need of low-income housing.[11]

New Jersey's poorer families in both our urban and rural areas have suffered tremendously as a result of this policy shift. There is little doubt that federal abdication of responsibility in this issue is a major factor in the growing number of homeless families. The reality is that this trend of blatant neglect on the part of our national leaders will continue for at least the next several years. It is clear that if New Jersey is to effectively address this crisis, strong State leadership in championing the right of families to shelter is required.

State Policy: Need for Clarity and Action

State policy in New Jersey clearly recognizes the basic rights of its families to be housed, noting: "It is the longstanding policy of this state that no person should be ...deprived of shelter." (P.L. 1984, Ch.180). In its 1975 Mount Laurel I ruling the State's Supreme Court reiterated this policy, observing that "there cannot be the slightest doubt that shelter, along with food, are the *basic human needs*...It is plain without dispute that proper provision for adequate housing of all categories of

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*Almost every parent dependent on AFDC in New Jersey is a mother with children

Homeless

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people is certainly an absolute essential in promotion of general welfare." (*Mt. Laurel I*, 67 NJ 151; 1975.)

In April of 1983, concerned over the growing number of homeless people in New Jersey, Governor Kean established his Task Force on the Homeless in New Jersey. Task Force members took less than 6 months to study the situation and release their first report. In it they concluded that "...the problem of homelessness in New Jersey has reached the point where it can no longer be ignored...Government can no longer rely on stop-gap measures nor can it continue, as it has in the past, to rely on the efforts of private charities and voluntary agencies to meet the bare survival needs of New Jersey's homeless."[12] They proposed a comprehensive series of recommendations aimed at preventing and addressing the problems of homelessness and based those recommendations on the "...urgent need for a comprehensive policy which integrates the responsibilities of State, County and local government with the appropriate function of voluntary agencies as direct service providers."[13]

Since the report has been issued there have been some initiatives implemented by the State on behalf of the homeless. A network of Comprehensive Emergency Assistance Systems (CEAS) was established to coordinate planning and emergency services on a county level to homeless and other citizens in need. In 1984 Governor Kean signed into law Bill A-299 introduced by Assemblyman David Schwartz (D-Middlesex), appropriating $1.6 million for a Homelessness Prevention Program. This program essentially provides rental and mortgage assistance on an emergency basis. (An indication of the pressing housing need in this state is the fact that this program ran out of monies months before their first year ended.) The State also appropriated some emergency funds to provide food and shelter in FY'85 and FY'86, and increased its still inadequate AFDC and General Assistance (GA) grants for FY'85 and FY'86.

Initiatives made to date, however, have not begun to address the needs of New Jersey's homeless families and individuals, and have failed to substantially address the root causes of homelessness in New Jersey.

State Commitment Challenged

In the face of the growing numbers of homeless people, advocates are beginning to question the State's commitment to remedy what has become a statewide crisis. Legal Services, the N.J. Department of the Public Advocate and local groups such as the Elizabeth Coalition to House the Homeless have initiated a number of civil actions around the state on behalf of homeless people. Through these cases, which include the *Algor* suit mentioned earlier, they hope to force state, county and municipal governments to establish clear, equitable policy on sheltering the homeless people in New Jersey, and to put that policy into effect.

Among the many areas of concern to those advocating for the State's homeless, there are some key issues they feel the State *must* address. One of these issues relates to the "fault" provision in the current AFDC/GA regulations. These regulations are used to determine whether a family or individual is eligible for Title IV A emergency assistance. According to this provision, an otherwise eligible AFDC family can only receive this assistance if they can prove that they are homeless through no fault of their own — that they had no opportunity to "plan in advance." A family which knows several months in advance that their rent is going to increase, is unable to find affordable housing in the interim, and is evicted for failure to pay rent, for example, is not eligible to receive emergency assistance for housing in New Jersey because of this provision, despite the fact that they are now homeless.

Another issue being challenged in the courts relates to the limit on the length of time that this emergency assistance is available to a homeless family or individual. Current regulations allow this assistance to be provided for no longer than one calendar month following the month a family loses its home. Faced with the scarcity of housing, advocates maintain that there is a clear need for this limit to be extended or lifted completely. It is almost impossible for a low-income homeless family to find decent housing on today's market within that short period of time.

ACNJ presents a day-long

South Jersey Child Advocacy Conference

at Glassboro State College
on May 15, 1986

Additional information available
through the ACNJ Office at
(201) 643-3876 or (609) 467-3211

A recent hearing in the Administrative Law Court in Newark affirms this point. Homeless individuals from an Elizabeth Shelter had been unable to locate housing. They had requested an extension of emergency assistance from the local welfare office, but had been denied because they had exceeded the current time limit. With the help of housing advocates, they appealed to the court and welfare officials, in a pre-trial agreement, extended the emergency assistance. The stringency of these regulations is clearly illustrated by the fact that in 1984 less than one-half of 1% of the state's AFDC families received emergency assistance for any type of emergency, including food, shelter, furnishings, etc.

Advocates are also calling for the State to provide the financial backing necessary to support its policy commitment to the homeless. A preliminary survey conducted last year by the Accountants for the Public Interest-NJ showed that it is "...thoroughly evident that New Jersey provides far less for all emergency services to the homeless ($85 per person, per year), than any neighboring state provides in funding for shelter alone." Some of our counties are without shelters for homeless families. Without adequate funding assistance from the State, private groups such as church groups and community agencies who have traditionally sheltered the State's homeless, have been unable to provide shelter for the increased numbers of people in need.

Advocates are also demanding that the State address the fact that many of the homeless families and individuals are simply unable to afford *any* housing in New Jersey due to the inadequacy of the current AFDC/GA assistance. As Table 1 illustrates, even 100% of the current AFDC grants is not enough to pay for shelter *alone*, based on real cost of living in New Jersey. Legal Services of New Jersey is currently developing a coalition of concerned citizens in order to press the State to take responsible action.

These issues and others, such as the lack of training for state and local employees who work with homeless people, the lack of coordination in planning and provision of services to the homeless and the breaking up of families, due only to lack of housing, must be addressed on a state level. There is a clear need for the state, through its Department of Human Services, to evaluate these issues and implement regulations and programs that more adequately address the real needs of homeless families.

Partnership Needed

The State, alone, cannot assume total responsibility for sheltering the homeless. Many of the suits filed on behalf of homeless people throughout the state require county and municipal governments to provide for the shelter and services required by the homeless as well. Those private groups, such as churches and the Salvation Army, who traditionally have ministered to the needs of the homeless, continue to play a major role in meeting those needs.

Community groups around the state are beginning to develop alternative living situations for lower-income families and individuals. Various options such as home-sharing, sweat equity programs, community land trusts and even urban homesteading are being developed and explored in various communities around the state.

In addition, people are beginning to come together both locally and on a county- and state-wide basis to speak up on behalf of the homeless people in the state. Groups such as the New Jersey Task Force on the Homeless, Right to Housing and the Union County Inter-faith Council on the Homeless are developing strong coalitions of citizens concerned about the growing problem of homelessness and the lack of strong initiative on the part of the State's Administration and Legislature to date. In some

(continued on page 5)

Homeless

(continued from page 4)

locations, such as Newark, homeless people, themselves, are joining together to demand appropriate action on the part of the state and municipality, and are asking to be given an opportunity to work on remedying their homeless state.

Leaders of many religious groups are beginning to voice their concern about the homeless situation. Members of various denominations at a local level are calling on their churches and synagogues to come forward and speak to the need for temporary shelter and for permanent housing for the homeless. Statewide groups such as the League of Women Voters, long active in advocating for low-income housing, are joining with other groups in a push for State accountability in the planning and provision of housing for our lower-income citizens.

Low-Income Housing: The Key

These advocates are aware, however, that any efforts on behalf of the homeless will be futile unless a comprehensive plan for addressing the housing needs of the state's lowest-income families is developed. The New Jersey Supreme Court's Mt. Laurel decisions represented an important first step toward developing such a plan. The new Council on Affordable Housing was developed in accordance with the Fair Housing Act of 1985, passed by the Legislature in response to the Court's Mount Laurel II decision. It will be responsible for reviewing and monitoring the implementation of municipal plans which are to include provision for the development of a fair share of low and moderate income housing. As noted by the Chairman of the Council, Arthur Kondrup, this Council and its work represent only another step towards addressing our low-income housing needs, however. ACNJ in its testimony before the Council in February, 1986, presented some recommendations which we believe will strengthen the potential positive impact this Act could have on lower-income families in the state. (The full text of these recommendations can be found elsewhere in this Newsletter.) The total effect of this Act, however, will take years and will most probably not have a substantial effect on the housing problems of the poorer families in the state. More must be done to address the real housing needs of these families.

There are community groups, many working in conjunction with state and municipal entities, who are actually developing low-income housing. These projects, however, are few and far between and are limited by lack of resources. A larger commitment of financial and technical support are necessary if non-profits are to be encouraged to take a greater role in developing and supporting these types of housing endeavors.

A TIME FOR ACTION

"All people share the basic human right to live in dignity, safety and security. Surely all of you, either as individuals or as representatives of your organization, recognize the need for that basic right for America's children. We have all seen the negative impact of disrupted and displaced families on children — in schools, in social encounters, in health situations, in emotional and mental problems. A place to call home, whether in a non-traditional setting or in the traditional mold, seems little enough to ask for in a country such as ours.''[14]

It is important, as we work to address this crisis of housing and homelessness, to keep in mind that for the homeless children of this State, housing is neither a commodity nor an investment, but a home. These children need, and should have the right to, the basic human provisions of food, shelter and clothing. Federal, state and local policy must acknowledge and insure this right.

The crisis of homelessness is growing. Thousands of families are already affected, and thousands more are at risk of imminently losing their home, and in some cases, losing their children. We need to begin working *now* on addressing this problem and the corresponding lack of low-income housing.

Our federal legislators need to hear that this problem is of major concern to New Jersey citizens. Our state government must be pressed to assume an active leadership role if this problem is to be addressed comprehensively and effectively. Municipal governments need to acknowledge their responsibility in exacerbating the current situation through exclusionary zoning laws and use of regulations or restrictions that have seriously limited the development of affordable family housing. They need to begin developing ways of providing their fair share of innovative housing options for the lower-income families of their regions, as required under the Fair Housing Act of 1985.

Those local, county and statewide groups already working to address the needs of the homeless need the support and input of the child advocacy community. This is a complex, difficult problem, but it is not an impossible one. Strong leadership, a committed partnership and an informed public awareness are needed if New Jersey is to ultimately address our current epidemic of homelessness. The prescription will not be simple or easy to swallow, but it must be accepted if the health of our children, families and state is to be ensured.

1. 1980 U.S. Census
2. Shirley Geismar, "Not Enough to Live On: A Survey of Living Costs and Conditions of Head Start Families in Newark," (April, 1984)
3. A recent national study conducted by Cushing Dolbeare, of the National Low Income Housing Coalition shows that New Jersey is third highest on a national Rental Crisis Index. This index represents a conservative estimate of the number of very low income renter households divided by the number of affordable rental households. Only California and Nevada have a worse problem than New Jersey.
4. Survey of rental discrimination due to parental status in New Jersey, Middlesex County Housing Coalition (1983/1984), and R.W. Maruns, et. al., "Reporting on Measuring Restrictive Rental Practices Affecting Families with Children: A National Survey." (HUD, 1980.)
5. For a more comprehensive discussion of this issue, see Stephen Eisdorfer's article "Housing New Jersey's Children . . . ," *ACNJ Newsletter*, (11/83).
6. The situations of Richard and Martha L. and their children and the other families described in this article are real. Their cases have been or are being addressed by county or municipal housing advocacy organizations. Their names have been changed to protect their privacy.
7. M. Tomaszewicz, "Children Entering Foster Care: Factors Leading to Placement (Summary Report)." DYFS; (1985)
8. Child Placement Review Report, 1984. CPR Advisory Council (1984).
9. J.B. Glassman, M.L. Petitt, and D.W. Basted, "Housing for Single-Parent Families," Department of Community Affairs (1982).
10. The President's Commission on Housing of 1982 found that there were over 10 million "very low-income" renting households in the nation, over 25% of whom live in subsidized housing. The rest live in sub-standard housing and/or pay over 25% of their income for housing.
11. An excellent explanation and guide to the FY '87 federal budget related to Low Income Housing can be obtained from the Low-Income Housing Information Service, 1012 14th Street, N.W., Washington, D.C. 20005. A $5 donation is recommended.
12. "Report of the Governor's Task Force on the Homeless," page 2, October 7, 1983.
13. Ibid.
14. Mary Lou Petitt, keynote speech, ACNJ Housing Forum: "No Place to Call Home," December 4, 1984.

April Conference Calendar

May 14-17, 1986	Hyatt Regency New Orleans, La.	**Sexual Victimization of Children.** For professionals who work with sexually abused children and families. For further info call Conference Coordinator at (202) 745-2176.
May 28, 1986	The Holiday Inn Cherry Hill, N.J.	**The Therapeutic Network of the Sexually Abused Child: Treatment Intervention and Prevention.** For further info call (609) 962-8333.
June 7, 1986	UMDNJ Newark, N.J.	**The Adolescent Family: Teenage Parents and Their Children.** The Third Annual Combined Adolescent Medicine/Child Psychiatry Symposium. For more info call Linda Gallmon, (201) 456-4267.

U.S. House of Representatives

Select Committee on Children, Youth and Families
385 House Office Building Annex 2
Washington, DC 20515
Excerpt from: *The Crisis in Homelessness: Effects on Children and Families*
A Fact Sheet

Homeless Infants and Children Suffer Serious Health Consequences; Some have Died

- Seven of the 89 Child abuse-related fatalities in New York City in 1985 were children living in welfare hotels. (Human Resources Administration, *Public Child Fatality Review Committee Report*, New York, December, 1986)

- During 1982 and 1983, the proportion of low birthweight babies (under 2500 gms.) born to pregnant women living in 10 New York City hotels for the homeless was more than twice as high (18 percent) as for women in the city as a whole (8.5 percent). Over half of the homeless women had minimal or no prenatal care. (New York City Department of Health, 1984)

- Between Spring, 1985 and December, 1986, the rate of chronic health conditions among the 1028 homeless children seen in health programs nationally was 16 percent, nearly twice the rate observed among ambulatory children in general. (Wright, 1987)

- Gastroenteritis, often caused by the ingestion of harmful bacteria from stale infant formula and unsterilized bottles, is one of the most common reasons for homeless infants being admitted to hospitals. Other serious complications such as weight loss, infected diaper rashes, and staph infections among infants are also requiring expensive medical care and follow-up. (National Coalition for the Homeless, 1985)

Developmental Delays, Academic and Emotional Problems Affecting Educational Progress for Homeless Children

- In one study of homeless children in Massachusetts, developmental delays were present in 47 percent of the children aged 5 years or younger, and 33 percent had two or more developmental lags. These included dependent behavior, aggression, shortened attention span, withdrawal and demanding behavior. They also exhibited problems with sleep, coordination, fear of new things, and speech difficulties. (Bassuk, 1986)

- In St. Louis, homeless children are displaying cognitive and developmental problems at three times that of the general child population. When tested, 80 percent of the children displayed significant language deprivation, an important predictor of school success. (Whitman, 1987

- In a study of homeless children ages 6 to 11 residing in Massachusetts shelters, 66 percent of the boys and almost 50 percent of the girls required further psychiatric and medical evaluation. Fifty-one percent of the children older than five were depressed and most stated that they had suicidal thoughts. (Bassuk, 1986)

- In addition to irregular school attendance, parents reported that almost 25 percent of the homeless children in Massachusetts were failing or performing below average; 25 percent were in special classes; and 43 percent had already repeated on grade. Sixty percent of Homeless children studied exhibited high levels of anxiety and depression which interfered with their capacity to learn. (Bassuk, 1986)

A.F.D.C. and Homelessness

By Jann Walton

THE SIGHT OF hundreds of homeless persons on Los Angeles streets has become so common that I sometimes have trouble remembering a time when the homeless were just those elderly men with substance abuse problems. It is hard to remember a time when Spring Street was primarily financial institutions, when Broadway was all classy, modern stores, and when Bunker Hill did not have a single City-Within-A-City condominium crowning it. It is hard to remember a time now when the entrance to almost every building didn't smell of urine, and people wrapped in ragged blankets didn't line my walk from one bus stop to the next on my way to work. It is hard to remember a time when Los Angeles wasn't "The Homeless Capital of the World."

There was a time when frantic mothers, followed by their children, were not begging every morning and evening for the change from my pockets for food or a night's lodging at a decaying motel nearby. There was a time when mothers and children living on the streets were a rare sight. But not anymore.

The welfare department (Department of Public Social Service) has become such an ungainly, cumbersome monster over the last 20 years, that even those who seem obviously eligible for their services must go through not just hours and days, but weeks of standing in lines, filling out forms, making and keeping appointments, and waiting for paperwork to be processed. It is an arduous, overwhelming task. And the State's failure to keep pace with the increases in the cost of living has made the allotment a mother may eventually receive, a sad commentary on the way we care for our poor in this country. According to the Center on Budget and Policy Priorities' 1988 report, *Holes in the Safety Net in California*, "a single parent with two children, and with no income, is eligible for a maximum AFDC cash grant of $633 per month, or $7,596 per year. This AFDC benefit equals 83.7% of the 1987 poverty line for a family of three (The estimated three-person poverty line was $9,069 in 1987.)."

We've all seen, if not personally known, women who, because of circumstances beyond their control, have had to become part of the welfare system. Suppose that woman was you. And suppose you made the necessary effort—the standing in lines, filling out forms, making and keeping appointments, and waiting your way through the process—to get help from DPSS. For the first couple of weeks of this procedure, your old friends and neighbors might give you small loans for food and whatnot. But the resources and patience of these friends are limited and soon exhausted. So, a month after you applied for welfare, here's where you are: You and your children still haven't received your first AFDC check. The landlord has locked you out of your dilapidated $400-a-month, one-bedroom apartment. You are all hungrier and more discouraged than ever before, and there's no room (and a long waiting list) at the local shelter. You and your babies end up sleeping wherever you can and begging whatever you can.

When the welfare check finally does arrive at your old apartment (you are there waiting for the mailman as you have been every day for weeks), it isn't much money, but it's enough to get one room for two weeks in an old hotel that doesn't require first and last month's rent. It's enough to buy a cheap hot-plate, some diapers, toilet paper, toothpaste, and soap...all things not covered by food stamps.

Food stamps. The amount you receive for yourself and two children will last ten days...two weeks if you are lucky. According to the Safety Net report, more than one of every four AFDC households in California do not even receive food stamps. In fact, California's food stamp participation rate for AFDC households is the third lowest in the nation. In this case you are lucky. You're eligible for them, but food stamps come only once a month. How are you going to survive?

How does any young mother survive in the welfare system these days? If you could work...but the scarcity and the cost of adequate child care in Los Angeles makes it extremely difficult for even two-parent families to work or to go to school to try to rise above the poverty level. And for the single mother it is very close to impossible. According to Children's Defense Fund's *A Children's Defense Budget*, "Each month 200,000 non-working mothers of young children turn down job offers because they cannot find or afford child care."

National Homeless Coalition states in their July, 1988, report, *Over the Edge: Homeless Families and the Welfare System*, "Although these programs are designed to aid the needy, even the aggregate assistance they provide is, with very few exceptions, woefully inadequate and does not succeed in raising poor families *even to the poverty level.*"

Over the Edge goes on to say, "Typically, it is only when AFDC families find themselves unable to stretch their grant to cover food, rent, transportation, and clothing costs, and are forced, finally, to seek emergency shelter, that the connection becomes obvious...Officials in Louisville assert, 'The bottom line is that unles these single-parent families receive other subsidies, such as housing, they cannot make it...' 91.2% of AFDC families are headed by single mothers."

With homelessness at crisis proportions in the country for some time now, the fastest growing segment of the homeless population has become families, primarily single mothers and children. With the inability of the welfare system to keep up with rising costs it is no wonder. **And costs, particularly in housing, are going to continue to rise.**

It is more and more apparent that AFDC recipients need subsidized housing to make even halfway decent lives for themselves and their children. Current welfare aid is simply not enough. Section 8, the federally subsidized housing program, is adequate *as far as it goes*, but it can take up to two years for an applicant to receive that subsidy. What does a mother do in the meantime?

Now, with some landlords opting out of their federal contracts, it seems that there will be many fewer low-cost housing units available than there currently are. What was a trickle out of the low-income housing market is becoming a torrent. With approximately 50,000 homeless people in Los Angeles County, how are the poor going to manage with even fewer subsidized units?

But it is not only the subsidized units that will be fewer. There is a great deal of low-cost housing scheduled for demolition in the next five or ten years. These are the old houses, apartments, and hotels that were part of a young Los Angeles many, many years ago. Of course, by this time, these old places are not in great condition, but they do constitute a great portion of the available low-cost housing here. What are we going to do without it? How many more families will sleep under bridges or in parks when the old places have been demolished?

It always used to seem that there was some place somewhere a destitute mother and her children could call home, but these places have almost disappeared from the landscape in our great rush to rebuild Los Angeles. L.A. is in the process of becoming a beautiful, modern technological miracle of a city. Everything sparkles...except for the streets and parks that are crowded with homeless mothers and children begging for change from the affluent passers by.

Homeless Reporter
(Shelter Partnership, Inc.)
September 1988

Safety Network
September 1988

Low Welfare Payments Linked to Family Homelessness

Washington, D.C.—Welfare grants for poor mothers and children are "grossly inadequate" and are pushing increasing numbers of families into homelessness, according to a report entitled *Over the Edge: Homeless Families and the Welfare System,* by the National Coalition for the Homeless.

Housing grants under the Aid to Families with Dependent Children ("AFDC") program cover less than half of federally defined "fair market rent" in most cities. (AFDC is the federal welfare program for poor mothers and children.) In 41 states, the combined value of AFDC and food stamps is less than 75% of the poverty level. The average AFDC grant now reaches less than 44% of the federal poverty level.

At the same time, federal housing programs for the poor have been cut 76% since 1981. Fewer than one-fifth of AFDC families—virtually all of whom are eligible—receive assistance under these programs. Families with children are the fastest growing group among the homeless, according to the report.

In over two-thirds of 25 cities contacted in a recent survey, inadequate welfare benefits contribute to homelessness. In each city, increasing numbers of families are doubling up.

Current Attempts at Welfare Reform Inadequate

Current benefit levels under the AFDC program make a mockery of the concept of a 'safety net' for America's poor families, the report found; their inadequacy, when combined with the acute shortage of affordable housing, is a major cause of the dramatic rise in homeless families.

"Politicians debating the intricacies of 'welfare reform' in the halls of Congress are missing the real issue: benefit levels are so grossly inadequate that they are literally forcing poor mothers and children over the edge of poverty and onto the streets," according to Maria Foscarinis, Washington counsel to the National Coalition for the Homeless.

"Any serious effort at reform must raise benefit levels to at least the bare minimum of subsistence defined by the poverty level," she added.

Future of Reform Unclear

It is uncertain whether the conference on the House and Senate welfare reform bills will be able to reach a compromise on the future of the welfare system. Negotiations will continue after Congress returns from its recess September 7th, and no further actions are planned.

Over the Edge: Homeless Families and the Welfare System is available from the Washington office of the National Coalition for $3.00.

Mental Health News
Bulletin
Spring 1987

Focus on Homelessness

The Grate Society's Children

Throughout the world, communities are focusing on homelessness, for the United Nations has declared 1987 as the Year of the Homeless. Mental health advocates in Dakar, Bangkok and Beijing, the sister cities of Washington, are no doubt groping also with efforts to correct the hazardous effects of homelessness on the mental health of homeless persons.

Here, on March 4, Mitch Snyder of the Community for Creative Non-Violence again claimed the attention of Washington to the plight of this nation's homeless through the "Grate American Sleepout." Held on Capitol Hill, it coincided with Congressional action to be taken on the Urgent Relief for the Homeless Bill (HR 558), which was passed by the House of Representatives to provide $725 million in relief.

Some 100 individuals participated in the Sleepout, including Mayor Marion Barry, Congressman Walter Fauntroy, and other Congressional representatives. In a statement to the press, Mr. Fauntroy said, "I wonder, as I try to feel for a fleeting moment what those who spend night after night feel, as they sleep on a grate, in an alley, or on a park bench, whether they find hope here. . . . When we leave here in the morning, I hope we will go to the floor of the House with a new awareness of just how desperately the homeless and hungry of America need the $725 million in relief that is called for in H.R. 558."

Mr Fauntroy also introducted a bill, H.R. 1354 which provides for establishment of a Federal Task Force on Food and Shelter for the Homeless, a single authority to coordinate all federal programs.

In the midst of the members of Congress and the celebrities, sleeping outside in the early morning 35 degree temperature, a single child lay hovering in a blanket over a steam grate. He had participated in the all night sleepout. This inquiring reporter questioned his father about why they had come and what impact he felt sleeping on the grates would have for his nine year old son. (They were from New York City, where on any night like March 4, children can be seen sleeping in subway stations, doorways, and in abandoned cars.)

It was the hope of this family, the father said, to call attention to the need to provide housing and services to help children who are experiencing homelessness.

What did the nine year old have to say about sleeping out all night? He yawned, and said, "I'm sleepy." Unspoken was, "Please do not bother me; let me rest." Knowing what we do about the developmental process of children, we can understand that even a one time sleep out might raise the consciousness of a child. In the future, the child may be able to associate the experienced differences and discomforts with those of another person sleeping in an abandoned car or on a grate.

Newborns in Shelters

Children living in shelters with parents who are homeless experience a unique set of problems, says Rev. J. L. Bryce of Oakland, California, another respondent with whom we talked. Reverend Bryce, who had come to participate in the Sleepout, is the founder of Mission Saved, which accommodates some 40 children from the age of infancy to 18 years. Reverend Bryce shared with us information about children who had spent the first months of life in his shelter. Mothers who had come to the shelter in the last months of their pregnancy, had delivered their babies, and because of scarcity of permanent housing had to return from the hospital to the shelter with their new born babies.

Mental Illness Among Homeless Families is Common

One of the most striking findings of the study (Michael H. Phillips, "The Forgotten Ones: Treatment of Single Parent Multi-Problem Families in a Residential Setting") casts doubt on the widely held assumption that mental illness among homeless families is rare. Phillips found that: "Slightly more than one-third of the mothers (36 per cent) also reported they have had a mental illness or 'problem with their nerves' in the past. Nineteen per cent reported having been hospitalized for the condition and another 17 per cent stated that they were treated on an outpatient basis. This figure may be underestimated because of the lack of willingness or embarrasment in acknowledging such difficulty."

"The Homeless Families of New York,"
by Thomas J. Main in THE PUBLIC INTEREST

How could something like this be possible?

A just released report of the Child Welfare League of America and Travelers Aid International estimates that for every 10 homeless adults, eight children are affected. The Travelers Aid in the District of Columbia provided data upon which this estimate was based, as did seven other large cities.

Ten per cent of the children studied – many of whom were traveling from state to state – were in need of health care. Ten per cent were suspected of being abused or neglected. Among the children, 21 per cent had spent the previous night unsheltered; 25 per cent had been in an emergency shelter; and 27 per cent had spent the previous night with friends or relatives.

Our statistics and experiences are showing that the choice the majority of families face early in their crisis is not between the streets and the shelter system. Approximately 57 per cent of the families come into the shelter system directly from living with another family.

Moreover, the experience of the shelter providers says that mothers such as those Rev. Bryce described, for a variety of reasons, have lost their permanent housing and have moved in with relatives or friends, or stayed in low priced hotels. When it became apparent that permanent or shelter housing would be available, they were forced to move from the homes of

Mental Health News
Bulletin
Spring 1987
Continued (page 2)

families and friends; and when they exhausted their resources, they had to move from the hotels.

Mental Health Needs

What of the mental health problems of homeless families and children? Dr. Ellen Bassuk has studied families in shelters in Boston, and has found that homeless families are especially troubled. Based on preliminary data in two unpublished monographs, Dr. Bassuk contends: "It is not only the economics of poverty that has created the new phenomena of homeless families, but the combined effects of poverty, violence, and profound deprivation of person's development and self esteem."

Her monographs are entitled, "The Feminization of Homelessness: Homeless Families in Boston Shelters" and "Homeless Families: Single Mothers and Their Children in Boston Shelters."

Dr. Bassuk found that the majority of the children of the families she studied had serious emotional problems and that 51 per cent older than age five were depressed.

Dr. Bassuk's evidence suggests that mental health services which focus on children and families should attempt to address not only the problems related to the temporary disorganization of the family life and the emotional problems which result from the immediate state of homelessness, but address through long term and sustained involvement the self-esteem and social functioning of families and children.

An earlier study, conducted by Michael H. Phillips of Fordham's Graduate School of Social Work, found that almost one-third of the mothers who were residents at the Henry Street Settlement Urban Life Center (1978-1979) reported they had had a mental illness or mental problems in the past.

The Phillips' study put in question the generally accepted idea that the incidence of mental illness among homeless families does not occur any more frequently than it occurs among low income families in general. Almost a fifth of the women (19%) he interviewed said they had been hospitalized for a mental illness; and another 17 per cent stated they had been treated on an out patient basis for a mental disorder. Mr. Phillips also pointed out that 69 per cent of the families provided less than acceptable care to their children; and 40 per cent provided "neglectful" care.

Mental health experts already are aware of the detrimental effects of the negligence and neglect on the ego development of children. Studies have shown that with appropriate intervention in the lives of children, and through family counseling and support to mothers through development of parenting skills, many of these harmful effects can be minimized. However, early detection of the problems is essential.

In shelters, the mental health and social service systems have unique opportunities to study family problems; to begin to link such families to permanent systems of mental health intervention; and to begin to give families a sense of the ways in which mental health services can minimize harmful effects and make the family feel better. Given these immediate involvements in mental health services, we will be able to enhance the family's readiness and ability to utilize mental health services after more stabilized housing is obtained.

The Mental Health Association of the District of Columbia suggests that case management approaches which only attempt to promote better management of resources and greater use of assistance programs deal with the superficial needs or partial needs of families. What is called for is greater and concerted use of clinicians, social workers, psychologists, and others to reduce mental health problems. Families need to be involved in therapeutic sessions to get underneath the problems of malfunctioning, which impact so severely upon children.

by Anita Bellamy Shelton

SAFETY NETWORK

Assuring Equal Access to WIC for Homeless Women and Children

by Jennifer Layman-Heitman, Nutrition Policy Analyst, Food Research and Action Center

The denial of badly needed services—food supplements, nutrition education, and medical referrals—to eligible homeless women and children will soon come to an end. New provisions in The Hunger Prevention Act of 1988 and the Stewart B. McKinney Reauthorization Act of 1988 outlaw the denial of benefits for the Special Supplemental Food Program for Women, Infants and Children (WIC) on the basis of homelessness.

In early 1988, local advocates and providers discovered that eligible homeless women and children in several states were being denied WIC Program benefits. The WIC Program serves low-income pregnant women, new mothers, and children up to age five who are at nutritional risk.

Hunger and homeless advocates contacted the Food Research and Action Center (FRAC), the National Coalition for the Homeless, and other national organizations with claims that administrative barriers in their states were preventing the homeless from participating in WIC. The American Civil Liberties Union conducted a survey of all state WIC Programs and determined that various policies of the U.S. Department of Agriculture's Food and Nutrition Service (FNS), which oversees the WIC Program, formed the basis of states' decision not to serve the homeless.

Confusing USDA Policies

The three separate FNS policies on WIC not only overlapped but in some cases appeared to be contradictory. The first stated that people living in "institutions" were not eligible for WIC benefits. A number of states interpreted the term to include homeless shelters, and categorically denied benefits to the homeless.

Second, FNS made serving the homeless through WIC a "state option."

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MILK
Special Supplemental Food Program For Women, Infants & Children

Third, an FNS policy clarification stated that homeless individuals staying in shelters were indeed eligible for WIC benefits, provided that the shelter did not accrue any benefit from or restrict a client's participation in the program, and that WIC food was not used in communal feeding.

While these instructions made it clear that the homeless could participate in WIC according to certain guidelines, states were actually pointing to these same FNS policies to justify the restriction or denial of benefits to the homeless.

Access Assured in National Legislation

The Food Research and Action Center and the National Coalition for the Homeless met with Congressional staff to assist in addressing the problem through national legislation. Identical provisions were drafted for both the Hunger Prevention Act and the McKinney Act that would assure equal access to WIC for homeless individuals.

The new laws state explicitly that homeless individuals who meet nutritional risk and income standards are eligible for WIC benefits regardless of whether they receive meals from soup kitchens, shelters, other emergency food assistance programs, or any federal food assistance programs.

States Must Conduct Outreach

The law also requires state agencies to describe in their state plan how they will provide benefits to homeless individuals and requires states to conduct WIC outreach at organizations and agencies serving the homeless. States are also allowed flexibility to tailor the WIC food package and food delivery system in order to meet the special needs of the homeless.

FNS will most likely issue new regulations in response to these laws in early 1989. At that point, state WIC programs will be required to amend their Fiscal Year 1989 state plans accordingly.

Local WIC Advocacy

Service providers and advocates for the homeless can play a key role in assuring that eligible homeless women and children receive the WIC benefits to which they are entitled. Visits to local WIC clinics and cooperation with WIC program providers and advocates will help to assure that homeless women and children are aware of the program and may be eligible.

Different methods of outreach to the homeless might include: displays of WIC posters in shelters and other areas accessible to homeless individuals, availability of WIC applications at shelters, and speeches to groups of homeless individuals about the program. Ongoing monitoring of local shelters to ensure compliance with FNS requirements will help ensure that homeless people staying in those shelters may participate in WIC.

For more information and/or a copy of the Massachusetts and New York state policies on serving the homeless, contact: Jennifer Layman-Heitman, Food Research and Action Center, 1319 F Street, N.W., Suite 500, Washington, D.C. 20004 (202) 393-5060.

WIC for Homeless Women: An Advocacy Success Story

Last January the Coalition was alterted by ECCO Family Health Center in Columbus and others around the state that homeless women, infants and children were systematically being denied access to the WIC program. This alarmed us greatly because all homeless people are at tremednous nutritional risk and this can be particularly devastating for pregnant women, infants and small children - the very people the WIC services and nutritional supplements are targeted to. We decided to take on this issue.

After some extensive research, with the help of the Food Research Action Center (FRAC) and the National Coalition for the Homeless (NCH) both in Washington D.C., we found that a State of Ohio policy guideline was causing the problem. Similar negative policies toward homeless people were found in many other states around the country. The state policy read that residents of group homes and institutions were not eligible to receive WIC. It seems that some local WIC administrators were considering homeless shelters, transitional housing and similar programs for the homelss to be institutions or group homes.

We submitted a packet to the Ohio Department of Health outlining the problem, describing model WIC efforts to serve the homeless from several other states, and recommendations on how the program in Ohio should be changed. Some in the Department were defensive and refused to recognize the problem. We spoke on the issue in meetings with other state and national officials and continued to put the heat on the Department.

Finally on June 6, 1988, the Ohio Department of Health issued a policy clarification which states, "Residence in a temporary shelter does not preclude eligibility for WIC and is not to be considered as residence in an institution as is described in Section 206.3 of the Ohio WIC Policy and Procedure Manual." Now homeless women who are pregnant or have infants or small children can participate in the WIC program, provided they meet the other routine eligibility requirements.

We did not stop there. Working with Rep. Tom Sawyer's (D-Arkron) office we helped to draft an amendment to the McKinney Act Reauthorization Bill regarding WIC. The amendment includes provisions that:

* define homeless people broadly to include those in shelters, institutions that provide temporary residency, temporary accommodation in the residence of another, or those in no shelter at all.

* clarify that homeless people are eligible to receive WIC regardless of where they receive their meals (shelters, soup kitchens, food assistance programs).

* allow states to be flexible to tailor the food delivery system and food packages to meet the needs of homeless participants.

* require states to conduct outreach efforts to organizations serving the homeless regarding the WIC program.

* require states to include in their annual plan a description of how they will provide benefits to homeless persons.

Thanks to the efforts of the **National Coalition for the Homeless, FRAC and Rep. Tom Sawyer** the amendment passed with overwhelming support in both houses of Congress.

If any homeless person has difficulties in accessing the WIC program in the future please contact our office.

WOMEN INFANTS CHILDREN

Off The Streets (Ohio Coalition for the Homeless)
Fall, 1988

Homeless Kids: 'Forgotten Faces'
National Affairs
Newsweek: January 6, 1986

HOMELESS KIDS: 'FORGOTTEN FACES'

And their numbers are increasing at a record rate

These days there's a new population out on some of the country's meanest streets --a group far different from the ranks of deinstitutionalized mentally ill. The new homeless, says Capt. Michael Fletcher, director of Chicago's Salvation Army Emergency Lodge shelter, symbolize America's "forgotten faces." They are young children--mostly from racial minorities and usually with their mothers--and they constitute the fastest-growing segment of the nation's homeless population.

Federal, state and local governments are now beginning to wake up to--if not solve--the problem. Last spring a House subcommittee reported that families make up 21 percent of the homeless. A 1984 New York state investigation found that more than half of the 20,200 homeless who sought shelter on an average night were parents and their children. Massachusetts reported that 75 percent of its homeless were children and their parents. And there are untold numbers who haven't been counted. House subcommittee investigators reported seeing "hundreds of families and children living on the streets." Says Washington homeless advocate Mitch Snyder: "I have yet to go into a good-sized abandoned building that did not have someone living in it, including many families... Nobody knows how many, because nobody looks."

Eviction notices: Reasons for the rising number of displaced families are easier to find. Gentrification of urban slums across the country has resuscitated neighborhoods--and sent rents skyrocketing. That, coupled with Reagan administration cuts in federal assistance and public-housing programs, has led to a decrease in low-income housing and an increase in eviction notices.

But the problem goes well beyond mere urban renewal. Dr. Ellen Bassuk, an associate professor of psychiatry at Harvard University, is the author of the first study of homeless families living in shelters. And according to Bassuk, "The issue with homeless women and children is not merely the economics of poverty, but the breakdown of the family." Noting that 40 percent of the homeless women who turn up in public havens are "battered" wives, Bassuk estimates that "two-thirds of those driven to shelters have experienced major family shake-ups."

A study conducted last summer of Boston's family shelters found that more than 90 percent of the families were headed by females, typically by women in their middle 20s. More than half were black, and two-thirds had either high-school diplomas or equivalency degrees. Most had no work experience and relied for

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support on Aid to Families with Dependent Children--which currently grants $396 a month for a family of three. Two-thirds of their children were under five years old.

Unfortunately, the solution for many families--public shelter--is sometimes as bad as the problem. In New York City, almost 10,000 children are housed in either 5 large family shelters or in 1 of 55 "welfare hotels." The hotels, notorious for their roving populations of prostitutes and drug addicts, are paid $1,800 a month by the city to put up each family. At the city-run Roberto Clemente State Park shelter in the Bronx, homeless families make do in a cavernous gymnasium holding eight rows of 210 cots and cribs. In Washington, homeless families needing emergency housing are sent to the Pitts Center--"an appropriate name," scoffs Mitch Snyder. "The place is horrendous and located on one of the biggest dope-dealing blocks in the city." Concludes Mark Smolensky, the House subcommittee's chief investigator and homeless expert, "The situation for (the nation's homeless) families is worse than it's ever been."

Cash Bonuses: Still, with recognition of the problem has come some improvement --and a little hope. In New York, where the Coalition for the Homeless believes that up to 20,000 youngsters between 14 and 21 roamed the streets without homes last year, Mayor Ed Koch has committed the city to renovating 4,000 apartments annually for poor families. The city is also trying to lure landlords into letting the homeless into empty apartment units in exchange for cash bonuses of $4,000. So far only 400 families have been placed this way; the city is trying to come up with better landlord incentives. In Boston, six family shelters have opened since 1983. Each provides a "child-life advocate," sometimes a pediatric mental-health nurse, to provide emotional support to kids. Massachusetts also offers anyone collecting welfare a hotel voucher entitling the recipient to a "safe, sanitary room" for up to 90 days.

In Los Angeles, a 16-bed county-funded center offers two months of free room and board to mothers with dependent children. The center keeps the mothers' welfare checks and food stamps until they have saved enough money to get back on their feet. And at the Salvation Army's emergency lodge in Chicago, public-school teachers are brought in every day to tutor children. The lodge also provides free doctors, a nurse practitioner and senior-citizen "foster grandparents" to help parents with their children. Still, says the Salvation Army's Lt. Col. John Cheyne, "to really solve the problem in a city the size of Chicago, we'd need a dozen places like it."

Neal Karlen with Susan Agrest in New York, Kate Robinson in Boston, Nikki Finke Greenberg in Washington and bureau reports

Safety Network
May 1986

Families Victims Of Economic Crises, According To Study On Maine's Homeless

Portland, ME—Over the course of a year, upwards of 3,500 people in Maine are in need of shelter, according to a new report by the Maine Task Force of Study Homelessness.

Commissioned by Governor Joseph Brennan in May 1985, the 29-page report concludes that on any given night 350 people are homeless in the state and tens of thousands of Maine households "are experiencing homelessness in the form of severe housing problems." In over 43,000 Maine households, more than 50 percent of monthly income goes for housing. Another 8,750 households live in severely overcrowded or substandard conditions.

At least 38 shelters, most sponsored by non-profit organizations with state assistance, operate in Maine's major communities with a total capacity of approximately 500 beds. The report shows that half of all the homeless in the state are in the Portland Area and most others in urban areas like Lewiston, Bangor, Augusta, and Presque Isle.

No Residential Alternatives

Up to a third of Maine's homeless are on the streets because of an economic crisis, the report states. Maine shelter operators indicated that they are seeing more working families and single parent households than ever before. Many of these receive only "minimal" cash assistance through the Aid to Families with Dependent Children (AFDC) programs according to the report.

The report's authors concluded that as many as a third of the homeless in Maine are chronically mentally ill. Many have been discharged from institutions with no residential alternatives available. The capacity of state psychiatric hospitals has been reduced by nearly 2,000 beds since the late 1960's

A sizable number of both the mentally ill homeless and others without mental illness suffer from alcoholism and substance abuse, according to the survey.

The report's findings show that some barriers exist for people in need of emergency assistance. According to the report, information about the shelters is often difficult for people in need to obtain, and too few beds are available to serve families, women, youth and those in rural areas.

Condition of Poverty

"At its root, homelessness is a condition of poverty—of not having enough to afford a roof over one's head," the report states. Census data indicates that 13 percent of the population, or 141,000 persons, are below the poverty level. Of these, almost 52,000 households comprising some 118,000 people are at risk of becoming homeless, according to the report.

Forty-two percent of the at-risk group are families; one-third are elderly; and the rest are individuals living alone or sharing a home with others.

"The financial situation of one type of household at risk of homelessness is illustrated by the example of a single mother with two children who receives AFDC," the report states. "She qualifies for a cash grant of $389 per month and approximately $126 per month in food stamps, for a total of $515.

"The family will be fortunate to find a cheap rental for $300 including utilities. A minimal food budget of $155 per month leaves a total of $60 for *all other* household expenses, including transportation, clothing, personal care and any other needs that may arise," the report shows.

The report's authors make a series of recommendations including increasing state efforts to provide housing, social services, and income support to assist Maine's homeless and to take steps to help prevent an increase in the problem statewide.

Section XI

Organizations to Contact

Organizations to Contact for More Information

Homelessness Information Exchange
1830 Connecticut Ave., N.W.
4th Floor
Washington, DC 20009
202/462-7551

National Coalition for the Homeless
1439 Rhode Island Ave., N.W.
Washington, DC 20005
202/659-3310

Child Welfare League of America
440 1st St., N.W., Suite 310
Washington, DC 20001
202/638-2952

Children's Defense Fund
122 C St., N.W.
Washington, DC 20001
202/628-8787

Save the Children Federation
54 Wilton Rd.
P.O. Box 950
Westport, CT 06881
203/226-7272

National Black Child Development Institute, Inc.
1463 Rhode Island Ave., N.W.
Washington, DC 20005
202/387-1281

Association of Junior Leagues, Inc.
660 1st Ave.
New York, NY 10016
212/683-1515

Better Homes Foundation
189 Wells Ave.
Newton Center, MA 02159
617/964-3834

Center for Law and Education
Larsen Hall, 6th Floor
14 Appian Way
Boston, MA 02138
617/495-4666

Section XII

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Section XIII

Publications Available From the Homelessness Information Exchange

Publications Currently Available

Homewords, the quarterly newsletter of the Homelessness Information Exchange, compiles effective national and local programs and resources that address homelessness. Each issue highlights model projects, public and private funding strategies, relevant research, and technical advisors. The programs summarized address a continuum of care including emergency, transitional, permanent, and preventive strategies. Annual subscriptions are $10.

General Information explains the causes of homelessness, population characteristics, misconceptions, federal responses, policy issues, and relevant research. The extensive compilation of materials is useful for public education efforts, public speaking, writing proposals or informing the media. ($10)

Transitional Housing offers an introduction to the concepts of transitional housing and its role as an intermediate step to independent living. It addresses issues in facility development, management and program design, with descriptions of services for families and single adults. References included. ($10)

Family and Child Homelessness summarizes the extent, causes and effects of homelessness among families and children. It includes a general overview, excerpts from a wide selection of reports, emergency and transitional case studies, and a bibliography of references. ($10)

Comprehensive Planning to Address Homelessness: City Initiatives presents a framework for addressing both the service needs of homeless people and the structural problems which contribute to homelessness. It is a guide for state and city offices, local planners, advocates and service providers. The packet focuses on six areas: task forces, assessments, emergency services, transitional housing and support services, permanent housing, and prevention. Eighteen cities' efforts are presented; enclosures describe specific components of 13 model programs. The price is $20; the subsidized rate is $10.**

Helping the Homeless in Your Community Educate, volunteer, advocate for the homeless in your community. This compilation of materials offers a general overview of the homelessness problem, with practical examples of how you can offer your time, skills, or support to homeless individuals and families in your locality. It discusses accepted myths, general education, volunteerism, fundraising, church involvement, and how to build coalitions. ($10)

(more)

Coalition Building to Address Homelessness is a compilation of guidelines for developing community-wide coalitions. This document addresses the role of coalitions in assessing community needs and coordinating local efforts related to homelessness. It includes examples and accomplishments of local public and private coalitions. ($6)

Homewords (yearly subscription)	____	@	$10	____
General Information	____	@	$10	____
Transitional Housing	____	@	$10	____
Family and Child Homelessness	____	@	$10	____
Comprehensive Planning	____	@	$20/10	____**
Helping the Homeless in Your Community	____	@	$10	____
Coalition Building	____	@	$ 6	____

Please make checks or money orders payable to:

Homelessness Information Exchange
1830 Connecticut Avenue, N.W.
4th Floor
Washington, DC 20009

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Organization: ______________________________

Address: ______________________________

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**Standard rates are for government offices, foundations, and businesses. Subsidized rates are for local and national nonprofit organizations.